THE DARK FLEECE

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

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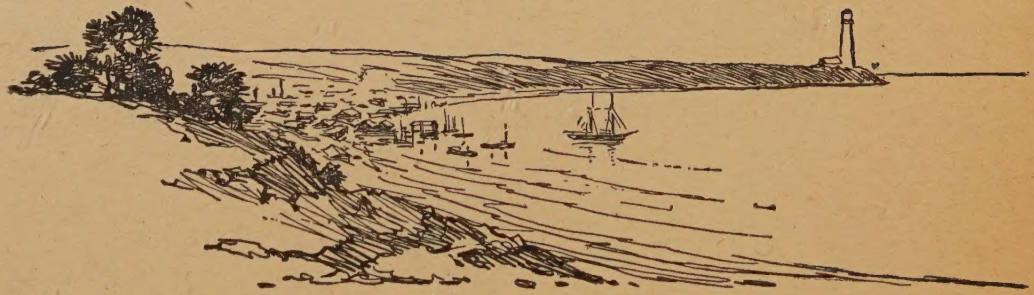

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BY

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

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OLIVE

THE DARK FLEECE

OLIVE

THE house in old Cottarsport in which Olive Stanes lived was set midway on the steepness of Orange Street. It was a low dwelling of weathered boards holding close to the rocky soil, resembling, like practically all the Cottarsport buildings, the salt weed clinging to the seaward rocks of the harbor; and Orange Street, narrow, without walks, and dipping into cuplike depressions, was a type of almost all the streets. The Stanes house was built with its gable to the public way; the length faced a granite shoulder thrust up through the spare earth, a tall, weedy disorder of golden glow, and the sedgy incline to the habitation above.

When Hester and Jem and then Rhoda were little they had had great joy of the boulder in the side yard: it was for them first impossible and then difficult of accomplishment; but they had rapidly grown into a complete mastery of its potentialities as a fort, a mansion impressive as that of the Canderays' on Regent Street, and a ship under the dangerous shore of the Feejees. Olive, the solitary child of

Ira Stanes's first marriage, had had no such reckless pleasure from the rock——

She had been, she realized, standing in the narrow portico that commanded by two steps the uneven flagging from the street, a very careful, yes, considerate, child when measured by the gay irresponsibility of her half brother and sisters. Money had been no more plentiful in the Stanes family, nor in all Cottarsport, then than now; her dresses had been few, she had been told not to soil or tear them, and she had rigorously attended the instruction.

The second Mrs. Stanes, otherwise an admirable wife and mother, had, to Olive's young disapproval, rather encouraged a boisterous conduct in her children which overlooked a complete cleanliness or tidy array. And when she, like her predecessor, had died, and left Olive at twenty-three to assume full maternal responsibilities, that serious vicarious parent had entered into an inevitable and largely unavailing struggle against the minor damage caused mostly by the activities about the boulder.

Now Hester and Rhoda had left behind such purely imaginative games, and Jem was away fishing on the Georges Bank; her duty and worries had shifted, but not lessened; while the rock remained precisely as it had through the children's growth, as it had appeared in her own earliest memories, as it was before ever the Stanes dwelling, now a hundred and fifty years in place, or old Cottarsport itself, had been dreamed of. Her thoughts were mixed:

at once they created a vague parallel between the granite in the side yard and herself, Olive Stanes—they both seemed to have been so long in one spot, so unchanged; and they dwelt on the fact that soon—as soon as Jason Burrage got home—she must be utterly different.

Jason had written her that, if they cared to, they could build a house as large as the Canderays'. Under the circumstances she had been obliged to look on that as, perhaps, an excusable exaggeration, though she instinctively condemned the dereliction of the truth; yet, more than any other figure could possibly have done, it impressed upon her, from the boldness of the imagery, that Jason had succeeded in finding the gold for which he had gone in search nine years before. He was coming back, soon, rich.

The other important fact reiterated in his last letter, that in all his absent years of struggle he had never faltered in his purpose of coming to her with any fortune he might chance to get, she regarded with scant thought. It had not occurred to Olive that Jason Burrage would do anything else; her only concern had been that he might be killed; otherwise he had said that he loved her, and that they were to marry when he returned.

She hadn't, really, been in favor of his going. The Burrages, measured by Cottarsport standards, were comfortably situated—Mr. Burrage's packing warehouse and employment in dried fish were locally

called successful—but Jason had never been satisfied with familiar values; he had always exclaimed against the narrowness of his local circumstance, and restlessly reached toward greater possessions and a wider horizon. This dissatisfaction Olive had thought wicked, in that it had seemed to criticize the omnipotent and far-seeing wisdom of the Eternal; it had caused her much unhappiness and prayer, she had talked very earnestly to Jason about his stubborn spirit, but it had persisted in him, and at last carried him west in the first madness of the discovery of gold in a California river.

Olive, at times, thought that Jason's revolt had been brought about by the visible example of the worldly pomp of the Canderays—of their great white house with the balustraded captain's walk on the gambreled roof, their chaise, and equable but slightly disconcerting courtesy. But she had been obliged to admit that, after all was said, Jason's bearing was the result of his own fretful heart.

He had always been different from the other Cottarsport youths and men: while they were commonly long and bony, and awkwardly hung together, thickly tanned by the winds and sun and spray of the sea, Jason was small, compact, with dead black hair and pale skin. Mr. Burrage, who resembled a worn and discolored piece of driftwood, was the usual Cottarsport old man; but his wife, not conspicuously out of the ordinary, still had a snap in her unfading eyes, a ruddy roundness of cheek, that

showed a lingering trace of a French Acadian intermarriage a century and more ago.

Olive always regarded with something like surprise her unquestioned love for Jason. It had grown quietly, unknown to her, through a number of preliminary years in which she had felt that she must exert some influence for his good. He frightened her a little by his hot utterances and by the manner in which his soul shivered on the verge of a righteous damnation. The effort to preserve him from such destruction became intenser and more involved; until suddenly, to her later consternation, she had surrendered her lips in a single, binding kiss.

But with that consummation a great deal of her troubling had ceased; spiritual vision, she had been certain, must follow their sacred union and subsequent life. Even the gold agitation and Jason's departure for Boston and the western wild had not given her especial concern. God was the supreme Master of human fate, and if He willed for Jason to go forth, who was she, Olive Stanes, to make a to-do? She had quietly addressed herself to the task of Hester, Jem, and Rhoda, to the ordering of her father's household—he was mostly away on the sea and a solitary man at home—and the formal recurrence of the occasions of the church.

In such ways, she thought, bathed in the keen, pale red glow of a late afternoon in October, her youth had slipped imperceptibly away.

. . . . . .

A strong salt wind dipped into the hollow, and plastered her skirt, without hoops, against her erect, thin person. With the instinct, bred by the sea, of the presence in all calculations of the weather, she mechanically dwelt on its force and direction, wrinkling her forehead and pinching her lips—she could hear the rising wind straining through the elms on the hills behind Cottarsport—and then she turned abruptly and entered the house.

There was a small dark hallway within, a narrow flight of stairs leading sharply up; the door on the right, to the formal chamber, was closed; but at the left an interior of sombre scrubbed wood was visible. On the side against the hall a cavernous fireplace, with a brick hearth, blackened with shadows and the soot of ancient fires, had been left open, but held an air-tight sheet-iron stove. The windows, high on the walls, were small and long, rather than deep; and a table, perpetually spread, stood on a thick hooked rug of brilliant, primitive design.

Rhoda, in a creaking birch rocker, was singing an inarticulated song with closed eyes. Her voice, giving the impression of being subdued, filled the room with its vibrant power. She had a mature face for sixteen years, vividly colored and sensitive, a wide mouth, and heavy twists of russet hair with metallic lights. The song stopped as Olive entered. Rhoda said:

"I wish Hester would hurry home; I'm dreadful hungry."

"Sometimes they keep her at the packing house, especially if there's a boat in late and extra work."

"It's not very smart of her without being paid more. They'll just put anything on you they can in this stingy place. I can tell you I wouldn't do two men's work for a woman's pay. I'm awful glad Jason's coming back soon, Olive, with all that money, and I can go to Boston and study singing."

"I've said over and over, Rhoda," Olive replied patiently, "that you mustn't think and talk all the time about Jason's worldly success. It doesn't sound nice, but like we were all trying to get everything we could out of him before ever he's here."

"Didn't he say in the last letter that I was to go to Boston?" Rhoda exclaimed impatiently. "Didn't he just up and tell me that? Why, with all the gold Jason's got it won't mean anything for him to send me away. It isn't as if I wouldn't pay you all back for the trouble I've been. I know I can sing, and I'll work harder than ever Hester dreamed of——"

As if materialized by the prounuciation of her name, the latter entered the room. "Gracious, Hester," Rhoda declared distastefully, making a nose, "you smell of dead haddock right this minute." Hester, unlike Rhoda's softly rounded proportions, was more bony than Olive, infinitely more colorless, although ten years younger. She had a black worsted scarf over her drab head in place of a hat, its ends wrapped about her meager shoulders and bombazine waist. Without preliminary she dropped

into her place at the supper table, the shawl trailing on the broad, uneven boards of the floor.

"The wind's smartening up on the bay," she told them. "Captain Eagleston looks for half a blow. It has got cold, too. I wish the tea'd be ready when I get in from the packing house. It seems that much could be done, with Olive only sitting around and Rhoda singing to herself in the mirror on her dresser."

"It'll draw in a minute more," Olive said in the door from the kitchen, beyond the fireplace. Rhoda smiled cheerfully.

"I suppose," Hester went on, in a voice without emphasis that yet contrived to be thinly bitter, "you were all talking about what would happen when Jason came home with that fortune of his. Far as I can see he's promised and provided for everybody, Jem and Rhoda and his parents and Olive, every Tom and Noddy, but me."

"I don't like to keep on about it," Olive protested, pained. "Yet you can't see, Hester, how independent you are. A person wouldn't like to offer you anything until you had signified. You were never very nice with Jason anyway."

"Well, I'm not going to be nicer after he's back with gold in his pocket. I guess he'll find I'm not hanging on his shoulder for a cashmere dress or a trip to Boston."

"Pa ought to get into Salem soon," Rhoda observed. "He said after this he wasn't going to ship

again, even along the coast, but tally fish for Mr. Burrage. Pa's getting old."

"And Jem 'll be home from the Georges, too," Olive added, seating herself with the tea. "I do hope he won't sign for China or any of those long voyages like he threatened.

"He won't get so far away from Jason," Hester stated.

"I saw Honora Canderay to-day," Rhoda informed them. "She wasn't in the carriage, but walking past the courthouse. She had on a small bonnet with flowers inside the brim and skimpy hoops, gallooned and scalloped."

"Did she stop?" Olive inquired.

"Yes, and said I was as bright as a fall maple leaf. I wish I could look like Honora Canderay——"

"Wait till Jason's back," Hester interrupted.

"It isn't her clothes," Rhoda went on; "they're elegrant material, of course, but not the colors I'd choose; nor it isn't her looks, either, no one would say she's downright pretty; it's just—just her. Is she as old as you, Olive?"

"Let's see, I'm thirty-six, and Honora Canderay was . . . she's near as old, a year younger maybe."

"She is wonderful to get close to," said Rhoda, "no cologne and yet a lovely kind of smell——"

"Not like dead haddock." This was Hester again.

"Do you know," proceeded the younger, "she

seemed to me kind of lonely. I wanted to give her a hug, but I wouldn't have for all the gold in California. I can't make out if she is freezing outside and nice in, or just polite and thinks nobody's good enough for her. She had an Indian shawl as big as a sail, with palm-leaf ends, and——"

"Rhoda, I wish you wouldn't put so much on clothes and such corruption." Olive spoke firmly, with a light of zeal in her gaze. "Can't you think on the eternities?"

"Like Jason Burrage and Honora Canderay," explained Hester; "Honora Canderay and Jason Burrage. They're eternities if there ever were any. It it isn't one it's bound to be the other."

. . . . . .

Olive's room had a sloping outer wall and casually placed insufficient windows; her bed, with a blue-white quilt, was supported by heavy maple posts; there were a chest of drawers, with a minute mirror stand, a utilitarian wash-pitcher and basin, a hanging for the protection of her clothes, and uncompromising chairs. A small circular table with a tatted cover held her Bible and a devotional book, "The Family Companion, by a Pastor." It was cold when she went up to bed; with a desire to linger in her preparations, she put some resinous sticks of wood into a sheet-iron stove, and almost immediately there was a busily exploding combustion. A glass lamp on the chest of drawers shed a pale illumination that failed to reach the confines of the room;

and, for a while, she moved in and out of its wan influence.

She was thinking fixedly about Jason Burrage, and the great impending change in her condition, not in its worldly implications—she thought mostly of material values in the spirit of her admonitions to Rhoda—but in its personal and inner force. At times a pale question of her aptitude for marriage disturbed her serenity; at times she saw it as a sacrifice of her being to a condition commanded of God, a species of matyrdom even. The nine years of Jason's absence had fixed certain maidenly habits of privacy; the mold of her life had taken a definite cast. Her existence had its routine, the recurrence of Sunday, its contemplations, duties, and heavenly aim. And, lately, Jason's letters had disturbed her.

They seemed filled with an almost wicked pride and a disconcerting energy; he spoke of things instinctively distressing to her; there were hints of rude, Godless force and gaiety—allusions to the Jenny Lind Theatre, the El Dorado, which she apprehended as a name of evil import, and to the excursions they would make to Boston or as far as New York.

Jason, too, she realized, must have developed; and California, she feared, might have emphasized exactly such traits as she would wish suppressed. The power of self-destruction in the human heart she believed immeasurable. All, all, must throw themselves in abject humility upward upon the Rock

of Salvation. And she could find nothing humble in Jason's periods, burdened as they were with a patent satisfaction in the success of his venture.

Yet parallel with this was a gladness that he had triumphed, and that he was coming back to Cottarsport a figure of importance. She could measure that by the attitude of their town, by the number and standing of the people who cordially stopped her on the street for the purposes of congratulation and curiosity. Everyone, of course, had known of their engagement; there had been a marked interest when Jason and a fellow townsman, Thomas Gast, had departed; but that would be insignificant compared to the permanent bulk Jason must now assume. Why he and the Canderays would be Cottarsport's most considerable people.

As always, at the merest thought of the Canderays, personal facts were suspended for a mental glance at that separate family. There was no sense of inferiority in Olive's mind, but an instinctive feeling of difference. This wasn't the result of their big house, nor because the Captain's wife had been a member of Boston society, but resided in the contrariness of the family itself, now centred in Honora, the only one alive.

Perhaps Honora's diversity lay in the fact that, while she seldom actually left Cottarsport, it was easy to see that she had a part in a life far beyond anything Olive, whose consciousness was strictly limited to one narrow place, knew. She always

suggested a wider and more elegantly finished existence than that of local sociables and church activities. Captain Ithiel Canderay, a member of a Cottarsport family long since moved away, had, from obscure surprising promptings, returned at his successful retirement from the sea, and built his impressive dwelling in the gray community. He had always, however different the tradition of his wife's attitude, entered with a candid spirit into the interests and life of the town, where he had inspired solid confidence in a domineering but unimpeachable integrity. Such small civic honors as the locality had to bestow were his, and were discharged to the last and most exacting degree. But there had been perpetually about him the aloof air of the quarter-deck, his tones had never lost the accent of command; and, while Cottarsport bitterly guarded its personal equality and independence, it took a certain pride in a recognition of the Captain's authority.

Something of this had unquestionably descended upon Honora; her position was made and zealously guarded by the town. Yet that alone failed to hold the reason for Olive's feeling; it was at once more particular and more all-embracing, and largely feminine. She was almost contemptuous of the other's delicacy of person, of the celebrated fact that Honora Canderay never turned her hand to the cooking of a dish or the sweeping of a stair; and at the same time these very things lifted her apart from Olive's commonplace round.

Her mind turned again to herself and Jason's home-coming. He had been wonderfully generous in his written promises to Rhoda and Jem; and he would be equally thoughtful of Hester, she was certain of that. People had a way of overlooking Hester, a faithful and, for all her talk, a Christian character. Rhoda would study to be a singer; striving, Olive hoped, to put what talent she had to a sanctioned use; and Jem, a remarkably vigorous and able boy of eighteen, would command his own fishing schooner.

The sheet-iron stove glowed cherry-red with the energy of its heat, and a blast of wind rushed against the windows. The wind, she recognized, had steadily grown in force; and Olive thought of her father in the barque *Emerald* of Salem, somewhere between Richmond and the home port. . . . The lamplight swelled and diminished.

She got a new pleasure from the conjunction of her surrender to matrimony and the good it would bring the others; that—self-sacrifice—was excellence; such subjection of the pride of the flesh was the essence of her service. Then some mundane affairs invaded her mind: a wedding dress, the preparation of food for a small company after the ceremony, whether she should like having a servant. Jason would insist on that; and there she decided in the negative. She wouldn't be put upon in her own kitchen.

Her arrangements for the night were complete,

and she set the stove door slightly open, shivering in her coarse night dress before the icy cold drifts of wind in the room, extinguished the lamp, and, after long, conscientiously deliberate prayers, got into bed. The wind boomed about the house, rattling all the sashes. Its force now seemed to be buffeting her heart until she got a measure of release from the thought of the granite boulder in the side yard, changeless and immovable.

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The morning was gusty, with a coldly blue and cloudless sky. Olive, reaching the top of Orange Street, was whipped with dust, her hoops flattened grotesquely against her body. The town fell away on either hand, lying in a half moon on its harbor. The latter, as blue and bright as the sky, was formed by the rocky arm of Cottar's Neck, thrust out into the sea and bent from right to left. Most of the fishing fleet showed their bare spars at the wharves, but one, a minute fleck of white canvas, was beating her way through the Narrows. She wondered, descending, if it were Jem coming home.

Olive was going to the Burrages'; it was possible that they had had a later letter than hers from Jason. It might be he would arrive that very day. She was conscious of her heart throbbing slightly at this possibility, but from a complexity of emotions which still left her uneasy if faintly exhilarated. She crossed the courthouse square, where she saw that the green grass had become

brown, apparently over night, and turned into Marlboro Street. Here the houses were more recent than the Staneses'; they were four square, with a full second story—a series of detached white blocks with flat porticoes—each set behind a wood fence in a lawn with flower borders or twisted and tree-like lilacs.

She entered the Burrage dwelling without the formality of knocking; and, familiar with the household, passed directly through a narrow, darkened hall, on which all the doors were closed, to the dining room and kitchen beyond. As she had known he would be, Hazzard Burrage was seated with his feet, in lamb's wool slippers, thrust under the stove. For the rest, but lacking his coat, he was formally and completely dressed; his corded throat was folded in a formal black stock, a watch chain and seal hung across his waistcoat. Mrs. Burrage was occupied in lining a cupboard with fresh shelf paper with a cut lace border. She was a small woman, with quick exact movements and an impatient utterance; but her husband was slow—a man who deliberately studied the world with a deep-set gaze.

"I thought you might have heard," Olive stated directly, on the edge of a painted split-hickory chair. They hadn't, Mrs. Burrage informed her:

"I expect he'll just come walking in. That's the way he always did things, and I guess California, or anywhere else, won't change him to notice it. And when he does," she continued, "he's going to be put

out with Hazzard. I told you Jason sent us three thousand dollars to get the front of the house fixed up. He said he didn't want to find his father sitting in the kitchen when he got back. Jason said we were to burn three or four stoves all at once. But he won't, and that's all there is to it. Why, he just put the money in the bank and there it lies. I read him the parable about the talents, but it didn't stir him an inch."

"Jason always was quick acting," Hazzard Burrage declared; "he never stopped to consider; and it's as like as not he'll need that money. It wouldn't surprise me if when he sat down and counted what he had Jason'd find it was less than he thought."

"He wrote me," Olive stated, "that we could build a house as big as the Canderays'."

"Jason always was one to talk," Mrs. Burrage replied in defense of her son.

Olive moved over to the older woman and held the dishes to be replaced in the cupbord. They commented on the force of the wind throughout the night. "The tail end of a blow at sea," Burrage told them; "I wouldn't wonder but it reached right down to the West Indies."

"I hope he brings me a gray satinet pelerine like I wrote," said Mrs. Burrage. She was obviously flushed at the thought of the possession of such a garment—a fact which Olive felt, at the other's age, to be inappropriate to the not distant solemnity of the Christian ordeal of death. She repeated

automatically: ". . . turn from these vanities unto the living God." She rose:

"I'll let you know if I hear anything, and anyhow stop in to-morrow."

Outside, sere leaves were whirling in gray funnels of dust, the intense blue bay sparkled under the cobalt sky; and, leaving Marlboro Street with a hand on her bonnet, she ran directly into Honora Canderay.

"Oh!" Olive exclaimed, breathless and slightly concerned. "Indeed if I saw you, Honora; the wind was that strong pulling at a person."

"What does it matter?" Honora replied. She was wrapped from throat to hem in a cinnamon-colored velvet cloak that, fluttering, showed a lining of soft, quilted yellow. In the flood of morning her skin was flawless; her delicate lips and hazel eyes held the faint mockery that was the visible sign of her disturbing quality. She laid a hand, in a short, furred kid glove, on Olive's arm.

"I am so pleased about Jason's success," she continued, in a clear insistent voice. "You must be mad with anxiety to have him back. It's the most romantic thing in the world. Aren't you thrilled to the soul?"

"I'm glad to—to know he's been preserved," Olive stammered, confused by Honora's frank speech.

"You sound exactly as if he were a jar of quinces," the other answered impatiently; "and not a true

lover coming back from California with bags of gold."

Olive's confusion deepened to painful embarrassment at the indelicate term "lover." She wondered, hotly red, how Honora could go on so, and made a motion to continue on her way. But the other's fingers closed and held her. "I wonder, Olive," she said more thoughtfully, "if I know you well enough, if you will allow me, to give you some advice. It is this—don't be too rigid with Jason when he gets back. For nearly ten years he's been out in a life very different from Cottarsport, and he must have changed in that time. Here we stay almost the same—ten or twenty or fifty years is nothing really. The fishing boats come in, they may have different names, but they are the same. We stop and talk, Honora Canderay and Olive Stanes, and years before and years later women will stand here and do the same with beliefs no wider than your finger. But it isn't like that outside; and Jason will have that advantage on us—things really very small, but which have always seemed tremendous here, will mean no more to him than they are worth. He will be careless, perhaps, of your most cherished ideas; and, if you are to meet him fairly, you must try to see through his eyes as well as your own. Truly I want you to be happy, Olive; I want every one in Cottarsport to be as happy . . . as they can."

Olive's embarrassment increased: it was impos-

sible to know what Honora Canderay meant by her last words, in that echoing voice. Nevertheless, her independence of spirit, the long-nourished tenets of the abhorrence of sin, asserted themselves in the face of even Honora's directions. "I trust," she replied stiffly, "that Jason has been given grace to walk in the path of God——" She stopped with lips parted, her breath laboring with shock, at the interruption pronounced in ringing accents. Honora Canderay said:

"Grace be damned!"

Olive backed away with her hands pressed to her cheeks. In the midst of her shuddering surprise she realized how much the other resembled her father, the captain.

"I suppose," Honora further ventured, "that you are looking for a bolt of lightning, but it is too late in the season for that. There are no thunder storms to speak of after September." She turned abruptly, and Olive watched her depart, gracefully swaying against the wind.

. . . . . .

All Olive's unformed opinions and attitude concerning Honora Canderay crystallized into one sharp, intelligible feeling—dislike. The breadth of being which the other had seemed to possess was now revealed as nothing more than a lack of reverence. She was inexpressibly upset by Honora's profanity, the blasphemous mind it exhibited, her

attempted glossing of sin. It was nothing less. In the assault on Olive's most fundamental verities—the contempt which, she divined, had been offered to the edifice of her conscience and creed—she responded blindly, instinctively, with an overwhelming condemnation. At the same time she was frightened, and hurried away from the proximity of such unsanctified talk. She did not go to Citron Street, and the shops, as she had intended; but kept directly on until she found herself at the harbor and wharves. The latter serrated the water's edge, projecting from the relatively tall, bald warehouses, reeking with the odor of dead fish, cut open and laid in salt, gray-white areas to the sun and wind.

A small group of men, with flat bronzed countenances and rough furze coats, uneasily stirred their hats, in the local manner of saluting women, and turned to gaze fixedly at her as she passed. Even in her perturbation of mind she was conscious of their unusual scrutiny. She couldn't, now, for the life of her, recall what needed to be bought; and, mounting the narrow uneven way from the water, she proceeded home.

Some towels, laid on the boulder to dry, had not been sufficiently weighted, and hung blown and crumpled on a lilac bush. These she collected, rearranged, complaining of the blindness of whoever might be about the house, and then proceeded within. There, to her amazement, she found Hester, in the middle of the morning, and Rhoda bent over

the dinner table, sobbing into her arm. Hester met her with a drawn face darkly smudged beneath the eyes.

"The *Emerald* was lost off the Cape," she said, "sunk with all on board. A man came over from Salem to tell us. He had to go right back. Pa, he's lost."

Olive sank into a chair with limp hands. Rhoda continued uninterrupted her sobbing, while Hester went on with her recital in a thin, blank voice. "The ship *J. Q. Adams* stood by the *Emerald,* but there was such a sea running she couldn't do anything else. They just had to see the *Emerald,* with the men in the rigging, go under. That's what he said who was here. They just had to see Pa drown before their eyes. . . . The wind was something terrible."

A deep, dry sorrow constricted Olive's heart. Suddenly the details of packing her father's blue sea chest returned to her mind—the wool socks she had knitted and carefully folded in the bottom, the needles and emery and thread stowed in their scarlet bag, the tin of goose grease for his throat, the Bible that had been shipped so often. She thought of them all scattered and rent in the wild sea, of her father——

She forced herself to rise, with a set face, and put her hand on Rhoda's shoulder. "It's right to mourn, like Rachel, but don't forget the majesty of God." Rhoda shook off her palm and continued in

an ecstasy of emotional relief. Olive hardened. "Get up," she commanded; "we must fix things here, for the neighbors and Pastor will be in. I wish Jem were back."

At this Rhoda became even more unrestrained, and Olive remembered that Jem too was at sea, and that probably he had been caught in the same gale. "He'll be all right," she added quickly; "the fishing boats live through everything."

Yet she was infinitely relieved when, two days later, Jem arrived safely home. He came into the house with a pounding of heavy boots, a powerfully built youth with a rugged jaw and an intent quiet gaze. "I heard at the wharf," he told Olive. They were in the kitchen, and he pulled off his boots and set them away from the stove.

"I'm thankful you're so steady and able," she said.

"I am glad Jason's coming home—rich," he replied tersely. Later, after supper, while they still sat at the table, he went on, "There is a fine yawl for sale at Ipswich, sails ain't been made a year, fifty-five tons; I could do right good with that. The fishing's never been better. Do you think Jason would be content to buy her, Olive? I could pay him back after a run or two."

"He told you he'd do something like that," she answered. "I guess now it wouldn't mean much to him."

"And I'll be away," Rhoda eagerly added; "you

wouldn't have to give me anything, Jem. Jason promised me, too."

An unreasonable and disturbing sense of insecurity enveloped Olive. But, of course, it would be all right—Jason was coming back rich, to marry her. Jem would have the yawl and Rhoda get away to study singing. And yet all that she vaguely dreaded about Jason himself persisted darkly at the back of her consciousness, augmented by Honora Canderay's warning. She was a little afraid of Jason, too; in a way, after so long, he seemed like a stranger, a stranger whom she was going to wed.

"He'll be all dressed up," Rhoda stated. "I hope, Olive, you will kiss him as soon as he steps through the door. I know I would."

"Don't be so shameless, Rhoda," the elder admonished her. "You are very indelicate. I'd never think of kissing Jason like that."

"I will go over and see the man who owns her," Jem said enigmatically. "She's a cockpit boat, but I heard the wave wasn't made that could fill her. And we have my share of the last run till Jason's here."

He paid this faithfully into Olive's hand the next day and then disappeared. She thought he came through the door again: someone stood behind her. Olive turned slowly and saw an impressive figure in stiff black broadcloth and an incredibly high glassy silk hat.

. . . . . .

She knew instinctively that it must be Jason Burrage, and yet the feeling of strangeness persisted. All sense of the time which had elapsed since Jason went was lost in the illusion that the figure familiar to her through years of knowledge and association had instantly, by a species of magic, been transformed into the slightly smiling, elaborate man in the doorway. She stepped backward, hesitatingly pronouncing his name.

"Olive," he exclaimed, with a deep, satisfied breath, "it hasn't changed a particle!" To her extreme relief he did not make a move to embrace her; but gazed intently about the room. One of the things that made him seem different, she realized, was the rim of whiskers framing his lower face. She became conscious of details of his appearance—baggy dove-colored trousers over glazed boots, a quince-yellow waistcoat in diamond pattern, a cluster of seals. Then her attention was held by his countenance, and she saw that his clothes were only an insignificant part of his real difference from the man she had known.

Jason Burrage had always had a set will, the reputation of an impatient, even ugly disposition. This had been marked by a sultry lip and flickering eye; but now, though his expression was noticeably quieter, it gave her the impression of a glittering and dangerous reserve; his masklike calm was totally other than the mobile face she had known. Then, too, he had grown much older—she swiftly com-

puted his age: it could not be more than forty-two, yet his hair was thickly stained with gray, lines starred the corners of his eyes and drew faintly at his mouth.

"Are you glad to see me, Olive?" he asked.

"Why, Jason, what an unnecessary question. Of course I am, more thankful than I can say for your safety."

"I walked across the hills from the Dumner stage," he proceeded. "It was something to see Cottarsport on its bay and the Neck and the fishing boats at Planger's wharf. I'd like to have an ounce of gold for every time I thought about it and pictured it and you. Out on the placers of the Calaveras, or the Feather, I got to believing there wasn't any such town, but here it is." He advanced toward her; she realized that she was about to be kissed, and a painful color dyed her cheeks.

"You'll stop for supper," she said practically.

"I haven't been home yet, I came right here; I'll see them and be back. I'll bet I find them in the kitchen, with the front stoves cold, in spite of what I wrote and said. I brought you a present, just for fun, and I'll leave it now, since it's heavy." He bent over a satchel at his feet and got a buck-skin bag, bigger than his two fists, which he dropped with a dull thud on the table.

"What is it, Jason?" she asked. But of herself she knew the answer. He untied a string, and, dipping in his fingers, showed her a fine yellow metallic

trickle. "Gold dust, two tumblers full," he replied. "We used to measure it that way—a pinch a dollar, teaspoonful to the ounce, a wine-glass holds a hundred, and a tumbler a thousand dollars."

She was breathless before the small shapeless pouch that held such a staggering amount. He laughed. "Why, Olive, it's nothing at all. I just brought it like that so you could see how we carried it in California. We are all rich now, Olive—the Burrages, and you're one, and the Staneses. I have close to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

This sum was little more to her than a fable, a thing beyond the scope of her comprehension; but the two thousand dollars before her gaze was a miracle made manifest. There it was to study, feel; subconsciously she inserted her hand in the bag, into the cold, smooth particles.

"A hundred and fifty thousand," he repeated; "but if you think I didn't work for it, if you suppose I picked it right out of a pan on the river bars, why —why, you are wrong." Words failed him to express the erroneousness of such conclusions. "I slaved like a Mexican," he added; "and in bad luck almost to the end." She sat and gazed at him with an easier air and a growing interest, her hands clasped in her lap. "What I didn't know when I left Cottarsport was wonderful.

"Why, take the mining," he said with a gesture; "I mean the bowl mining at first . . . just the heavy work in it killed off most of the prospectors

—all day with a big iron pan, half full of clay and gravel, sloshing about in those rivers. And maybe you'd work a month without a glimmer, waking wet and cold under the sierras, whirling the pan round and round; and maybe when you had the iron cleared out with a magnet, and dropped in the quicksilver, what gold was there wouldn't amalgam. I can tell you, Olive, only the best, or the hardest, came through."

He produced a blunt, tapering cigar and lighted it expansively.

"A lonely and dangerous business: every one carried his dust right on his body, and there were plenty would risk a shot at a miner coming back solitary with his donkey and his pile. It got better when the new methods came, and we used a rocker hollowed out of a log. Then four of us went in partnership—one to dig the gravel, one to carry it to the cradle, another to keep it rocking, and the last to pour in the water. Then we drawed off the gold and sand through a plug hole.

"We did fine at that," he told her, "and in the fall of 'Fifty cleaned up eighteen thousand apiece. Then we had an argument: we were in the Yuba country, where it was kind of bad; two of us, and I was one of them, said to divide the dust, and get out best we could; but the others wanted to send all the gold to San Francisco in charge of one of them and a man who was going down with more dust. We finally agreed to this and lost every ounce we'd

mined. The escort said they were shot by some of the disbanded California army, but I'm not sure. It seemed to me like our two had met somewhere, killed the other, and got the gold to rights."

"O Jason!" Olive exclaimed.

"That was nothing," he said complacently; "but only a joker to start with. I did a lot of things then to get a new outfit—sold peanuts on the Plaza in 'Frisco, or hollered the New York *Tribune* at a dollar and a half a copy; I washed glasses in a saloon and drove mules. After that I took a steamer for Stockton and the Calaveras. You ought to have seen Stockton, Olive—board shanties and blanket houses and tents, with two thieves left hanging on a gallows. We went from there, a party of us, for the north bank of the Calaveras, tramping in dust so hot that it scorched your face. Sluicing had just started and long Toms—a long Tom is a short placer—so we didn't know much about it. Looking back I can see the gold was there; but after working right up to the end of the season we had no more than a couple of thousand apiece. There were too many of us to start with.

"Well, I drifted back to San Francisco." He paused, and the expression which had most disturbed her deepened on his countenance, a stillness like the marble of a gravestone guarding implacable secrets.

"San Francisco is different from Cottarsport, Olive," he said after a little. "Here you wouldn't

believe there was such a place; and there Cottarsport seemed too safe to be true. . . . Well, I went after it again, this time as far north as Shasta. I prospected from the Shasta country south, and got a good lump together again. By then placer mining was better understood; we had sluice boxes two or three hundred feet long, connected with the streams, with strips nailed across the bottom where the gold and sand settled as the water ran through. Yes, I did well; and then fluming began.

"That," he explained, "is damming a river around its bed and washing the open gravel. It takes a lot of money, a lot of work and men; and sometimes it pays big, and often it doesn't. I guess there were fifty of us at it. We slaved all the dry season at the dam and flume, a big wood course for the stream; we had wing dams for the placers and ditches, and the best prospects for eight or ten weeks' washing. It was early in September when we were ready to start, and on a warm afternoon I said to an old pardner, 'What do you make out of those big, black clouds settling on the peaks?' He took one look—the wind was a steady and muggy southwester—and then he sat down and cried. The tears rolled right over his beard.

"It was the rains, nearly two months early, and the next day dams, flume, boards, and hope boiled down past us in a brown mash. That left me poorer than I'd ever been before; I had more when I was home on the wharves."

"Wait," she interrupted him, rising; "if you're coming back to supper I must put the draught on the stove." From the kitchen she heard him singing in a low, contented voice:

"The pilot bread was in my mouth,
The gold dust in my eye,
And though from you I'm far away,
Dear Anna, don't you cry!"

Then:

"Oh, Ann Eliza!
Don't you cry for me.
I'm going to Calaveras
With my washbowl on my knee."

She returned and resumed her position with her hands folded.

"And that," Jason Burrage told her, "was how I learned gold mining in California. I sank shafts, too, and worked a windlass till the holes got so deep they had to be timbered and the ore needed a crusher. But after the fluming I knew what to wait for. I kept going in a sort of commerce for a while—buying old outfits and selling them again to the late comers—a pick or shovel would bring ten dollars and long boots fifty dollars a pair. I got twenty-four dollars for a box of Seilditz powders. Then in 'Fifty-four I went in with three scientific men—one had been a big chemist at Paris

—and things took a turn. We had the dead wood on gold. Why, we did nothing but re-travel the American Fork and Indian Bar, the Casumnec and Moquelumne, and work the tailings the earlier miners had piled up and left, just like I had south. We did some pretty things with cyanide; yes, and hydraulics and powder.

"Things took a turn," he repeated; "investments in stampers and so on, and here I am."

After he had gone—supper, she had informed him, was at five exactly—Olive had the bewildered feeling of partially waking from an extraordinary dream. Yet the buckskin bag on the table possessed a weighty actuality.

. . . . . .

She sat for a long while gazing intently at the gold, which, like a crystal ball, held for her varied reflections. Then, recalling the exigencies of the kitchen, she hurried abruptly away. Her thoughts wheeled about Jason Burrage in a confusion of all the impressions she had ever had of him. But try as she might she could not picture the present man as a part of her lift in Cottarsport; she could not see herself married to him, although that event waited just beyond to-day. She set her lips in a straight line, a fixed purpose gave her courage in place of the timidity inspired by Jason's opulent strangeness—she couldn't allow herself to be turned aside for a moment from the way of righteousness.

The gods of mammon, however they might blackly assault her spirit, should be confounded.

". . . hide me
Till the storm of life is past."

She sang in a high quavering voice. There was a stir beyond—surely Jason wasn't back so soon; but it was Jem.

"What's on the table here?" he called.

"You let that be," she cried back in a panic at having left the gift so exposed. "That's gold dust; Jason brought it, two thousand dollars' worth."

A prolonged whistle followed her announcement. Jem appeared with the buckskin bag in his hand. "Why, here's two yawls right in my hand," he asserted.

"Mind one thing, Jem," she went on, "he's coming back for supper, and I won't have you and Rhoda at him about boats and singing the minute he's in the house."

Rhoda, with exclamations, and then Hester, inspected the gold. "I'd slave five years for that," the latter stated, "and then hardly get it; and here you have it for nothing."

"You'll get the good of it too, Hester," Olive told her.

"I'll just work for what I get," she replied fiercely. "I won't take a penny from Jason, Olive Stanes; you can't hold that over me, and the sooner you both know it the better."

"You ought to pray to be saved from pride."

"I don't ask benefits from any one," Hester stoutly observed.

"Hester——" Olive commenced, scandalized, but she stopped at Jason's entrance. "Hester she wanted a share of the gold," Jem declared with a light in his slow gaze, "and Olive was cursing at her."

"Lots more," said Jason Burrage, "buckets full."

In spite of the efforts of every one to be completely at east the supper was unavoidably stiff. But when Jason had lighted one of his blunt cigars, and begun a vivid description of western life, the Staneses were transported by the marvels following one upon another: a nugget had been picked up over a foot long, it weighed a hundred and ninety pounds, and realized forty-three thousand dollars. "Why, fifty and seventy-five lumps were common," he asserted. "At Ford's Bar a man took out seven hundred dollars a day for near a month. Another found seventeen thousand dollars in a gutter two or three feet deep and not a hundred yards long.

"But 'Frisco was the place; you could see it spread in a day with warehouses on the water and tents climbing up every hill. Happy Valley, on the beach, couldn't hold another rag house. The Parker House rented for a hundred and seventy thousand a year, and most of it paid for gambling privileges; monté and faro, blazing lights and brass bands everywhere and dancing in the El Dorado saloon.

At first the men danced with each other, but later——"

He stopped; an awkward silence followed. Olive was rigid with inarticulate protest, a sense of outrage —gambling, saloons, and dancing! All that she had feared about Jason became more concrete, more imminent. She saw California as a modern Babylon, a volcano of gold and vice; already she had heard of great fires that had devasted it.

"We didn't mine on Sunday, Olive," Jason assured her; "and all the boys went to the preaching and sang the hymns, standing out on the grass."

Hester, finally, with a muttered period, rose and disappeared; Jem went out to consult with a man, his nod to Olive spoke of yawls; and Rhoda, at last, reluctantly made her way above. Olive's uneasiness increased when she found herself alone with the man she was to marry.

"I don't like Rhoda and Jem hearing about all that wickedness," she told Jason Burrage; "they are young and easy affected. Rhoda gives me a lot of worry as it is."

"Suppose we forget them," he suggested. "I haven't had a word with you yet; that is, about ourselves. I don't even know but you have gone and fell in love with some one else."

"Jason," she answered, "how can you? I told you I'd marry you, and I will."

"Are you glad to see me?" he demanded, coming closer and capturing her hand.

"Why, what a question. Of course I'm pleased you're back and safe."

"You haven't got a headache, have you?" he inquired jocularly.

"No," she replied seriously. His words, his manners, his grasp, worried her more and more. Still, she reminded herself, she must be patient, accept life as it had been ordained. There was a slight flutter at her heart, a constriction of her throat; and she wondered if this were love. She should, she felt, exhibit more warmth at Jason's return, the preservation, through such turbulent years of absence, of her image. But it was beyond her power to force her hand to return his pressure: her fingers lay still and cool in his grasp.

"You are just the same, Olive," he told her; "and I'm glad you're what you are, and that Cottarsport is what it is. That's why I came back: it was in my blood, the old town and you. All the time I kept thinking of when I'd come back rich as I made up my mind to be, and get you what you ought to have—be of some importance in Cottarsport, like the Canderays. The old captain, too, died while I was away. How's Honora?"

"Honora Canderay is an ungodly woman," Olive asserted with emphasis.

"I don't know anything about that," he said; "but I always kind of liked to look at her. She reminded me of a schooner with everything set coming up brisk into the wind." Olive made a motion

toward the stove, but he restrained her; rising, he put in fresh wood. Then he turned and again seemed lost in a long, contented inspection of the quiet interior. Olive saw that marks of weariness shadowed his eyes.

"This is what I came back for," he reiterated; "peaceful as the forests, and yet warm and human. Blood counts." He returned to his place by her, and leaned forward, very earnestly. "California isn't real the way this is," he told her; "the women were just paint and powder, like things you would see in a fever, and then you'd wake up, in Cottarsport, well again, with you, Olive."

She managed to smile at him in acknowledgment of this.

"I'm desperately glad I pulled through without many scars. But there are some, Olive; that was bound to be. I don't know if a man had better say anything about the past, or just let it be, and go on. Times I think one and then the other. Yet you are so calm sitting here, and so good, it would be a big help to tell you . . . Olive, out on the American, and God knows how sorry I've been, I killed a man, Olive."

Slowly she felt herself turning icy cold, except for the hot blood rushing into her head. She stared at him for a moment, horrified; and then mechanically drew back, scraping the chair across the floor. Perhaps she hadn't understood, but certainly he had said——

"Wait till I tell what I can for myself," he hurried on, following her. "It was when the four of us were working with a rocker. I was shoveling the gravel, and every one in California knows that when you're doing that, and find a nugget over half an ounce, it belongs to you personal and not to the partnership. Well, I came on a big one, and laid it away—they all saw it—and then this Eddie Lukens hid it out on me. He was the only one near where I had it; he broke it up and put it in the cradle, sure; and in the talk that followed I—I shot him."

He laid a detaining hand on her shoulder, but she wrenched herself away.

"Don't touch me!" she breathed. She thought she saw him bathed in the blood of the man he had slain. Her lips formed a sentence, " 'Thou shalt not kill.' "

"I was tried at Spanish Bar," he continued. "Miners' law is better than you hear in the East. It's quick, it has to be, but in the main it's serious and right. I was tried with witnesses and a jury and they let me off; they justified me. That ought to go for something."

"Don't come near me," she cried, choking, filled with dread and utter loathing. "How can you stand there and—stand there, a murderer, with a life on your heart."

His face quivered with concern; in spite of her words he drew near her again, repeating the fact that he had been judged, released. Olive Stanes's

hysteria vanished before the cold stability which came to her assistance, the sense of being rooted in her creed.

" 'Thou shalt not kill,' " she echoed.

The emotion faded from his features, his countenance once more became masklike, the jaw was hard and sharp, his eyes narrowed. "It's all over then?" he asked. She nodded, her lips pinched into a white line.

"What else could be hoped? Blood guiltiness. O Jason, pray to save your soul."

He moved over to where his high silk hat reposed, secured it, and turned. "This will be final." His voice was hard. Olive stood slightly swaying, with closed eyes. Then she remembered the buckskin bag of not yellow but scarlet gold. She stumbled forward to it and thrust the weight into his hand. Jason Burrage's fingers closed on the gift, while his gaze rested on her from under contracted brows. He was, it seemed, about to speak, but instead preserved an intense silence; he looked once more about the room, still and old in its lamplight. Why didn't he go? Then she saw that she was alone:

Like the eternal rock outside the door.

From above came the clear, joyous voice of Rhoda singing. Olive crumpled into a chair. Soon Jem would be back. . . . She turned and slipped down upon the floor in an agony of prayer.

HONORA

HONORA CANDERAY saw Jason Burrage on the day after his arrival in Cottarsport: he was walking through the town with a set, inattentive countenance; and, although she was in the carriage and leaned forward, speaking in her ringing voice, it was evident that he had not noticed her. She thought his expression gloomy for a man returned with a fortune to his marriage. Honora still dwelt upon him as she slowly progressed through the capricious streets and mounted toward the hills beyond. He presented, she decided, an extraordinary, even faintly comic, appearance in Cottarsport, with a formal black coat open on a startling waistcoat and oppressive gold chain, pale trousers and a silk hat.

Such clothes, theatrical in effect, were inevitable to his changed condition and necessarily stationary taste. Yet, considering, she shifted the theatrical to dramatic: in an obscure but palpable manner Jason did not seem cheap. He never had in the past. And now, while his inappropriate overdressing in the old town of loose and weathered raiment brought a smile to her firm lips, there was still about him the air which from the beginning had

made him more noticeable than his fellows. It had even been added to—by the romance of his journey and triumph.

She suddenly realized that, by chance, she had stumbled on the one term which more than any other might contain Jason. Romantic. Yes, that was the explanation of his power to stir always an interest in him, vaguely suggest such possibilities as he had finally accomplished, the venture to California and return with gold and the complicated watch chain. She had said no more to him than to the other Cottarsport youth and young manhood, perhaps a dozen sentences in a year; but the others merged into a composite image of fuzzy chins, reddened knuckles, and inept, choked speech, and Jason Burrage remained a slightly sullen individual with potentialities. He had never stayed long in her mind, or had any actual part in her life—her mother's complete indifference to Cottarsport had put a barrier between its actuely independent spirit and the Canderays—but she had been easily conscious of his special quality.

That in itself was no novelty to her experience of a metropolitan and distinguished society: what now kept Jason in her thoughts was the fact that he had made his capability serve his mood; he had taken himself out into the world and there, with what he was, succeeded. His was not an ineffectual condition—a longing, a possibility that, without the power of accomplishment, degenerated into a

mere attitude of bitterness. Just such a state, for example, as enveloped herself.

The carriage had climbed out of Cottarsport, to the crown of the height under which it lay, and Honora ordered Coggs, a coachman decrepit with age, to stop. She half turned and looked down over the town with a veiled, introspective gaze. From here it was hardly more than a narrow rim of roofs about the bright water, broken by the white bulk of her dwelling and the courthouse square. The hills, turning roundly down, were sere and showed everywhere the gray glint of rock; Cottar's Neck already appeared wintry; a diminished wind, drawing in through the Narrows, flattened the smoke of the chimneys below.

Cottarsport!

The word, with all its implications, was so vivid in her mind that she thought she must have spoken it aloud. Cottarsport and the Canderays—now one solitary woman. She wondered again at the curious and involved hold the locality had upon her; its tyranny over her birth and destiny. It was comparatively easy to understand the influence the place had exerted on her father: commencing with his sixteenth year, his life had been spent, until his retirement from the sea, in arduous voyages to far ports and cities. His first command—the anchor had been weighed on his twentieth birthday—had been of a brig to Zanzibar for a cargo of gum copal; his last a storm-battered journey about, apparently,

all the perilous capes of the world. Then he had been near fifty, and the space between was a continuous record of struggle with savage and faithless peoples, strange latitudes and currents, and burdensome responsibilities.

Her mother, too, presented no insuperable obstacle to a sufficient comprehension—a noted beauty in a gay and self-indulgent society, she had passed through a triumphant period without forming any attachment. An inordinate amount of champagne had been uncorked in her honor, compliment and service and offers had made up her daily round; until, almost impossibly exacting, she had found herself beyond her early radiance, in the first tragic realization of decline. Stopping, perhaps, in the midst of slipping her elegance of body into a party dress, she remembered that she was thirty-five—just Honora's age at present. The compliments and offers had lessened, she was in a state of weary revulsion when Ithiel Canderay—bronzed and despotic and rich—had appeared before her and, the following day, urged marriage.

Yes, it was easy to see why the shipmaster, desirous of peace after the unpeaceful sea, should build his house in the still, old port the tradition of which was in his blood. It was no more difficult to understand how his wife, always a little tired now from the beginning ill effects of ceaseless balls and wining, should welcome a spacious, quiet house and unflagging, patient care.

All this was clear; and, in a way, it made her own position logical—she was the daughter, the repository, of such varied and yet unified forces. In moments of calm, such as this, Honora could be successfully philosophical. But she was not always placid; in fact she was placid but an insignificant part of her waking hours. She was ordinarily filled with emotions that, having no outlet, kept her stirred up, half resentful, and half desirous of things which she yet made no extended effort to obtain.

Honora told herself daily that she detested Cottarsport, she intended to sell her house, or give it to the town, and move to Boston. But, after three or four weeks in the city, a sense of weariness and nostalgia would descend upon her—the bitterness of her mother lived over again—and drive her back to the place she had left with such decided expressions of relief.

This was the root of her not large interest in Jason Burrage—he, too, she had always felt, had had possibilities outside the local life and fish industry; and he had gone forth and justified, realized, them. He had broken away from the enormous pressure of custom, personal habit, and taken from life what was his. But she, Honora Canderay, had not had the courage to free herself from an existence without incentive, without reward. Something of this might commonly find excuse in the fact that she was a woman, and that the doors of life and experience, except one, were closed to her; but, in-

dividually, she had little use for this supine attitude. Her blood was too domineering. She consigned such inhibition to pale creatures like Olive Stanes.

. . . . . .

The sun, sinking toward the plum-colored hills on the left, cast a rosy glow over low-piled clouds at the far horizon, and the water of the harbor seemed scattered with the petals of crimson peonies. The air darkened perceptibly. For a moment the gray town on the fading water, the distant flushed sky, were charged with the vague unrest of the flickering day. Suddenly it was colder, and Honora, drawing up her shawl, sharply commanded Coggs to drive on.

She was going to fetch Paret Fifield from the steam railway station nearest Cottarsport. He visited her at regular intervals—although the usual period had been doubled since she'd seen him—and asked her with unfailing formality to be his wife. Why she hadn't agreed long ago, except that Paret was Boston personified, she did not understand. In the moments when she fled to the city she always intended to have him come to her at once. But hardly had she arrived before her determination would waver, and her thoughts automatically, against her will, return to Cottarsport.

Studying him, as they drove back through the early dusk, she was surprised that he had been so long-suffering. He was not a patient type of man;

rather he was the quietly aggressive, suavely selfish example for whom the world, success, had been a very simple matter. He was not solemn, either, or a recluse, as faithful lovers commonly were; but furnished a leading figure in the cotillions and had a nice capacity for wine. She said almost complainingly:

"How young and gay you look, Paret, with your lemon verbena."

He was, it seemed to her, not entirely at ease, and almost confused at her statement. Nevertheless, he gave his person a swiftly complacent glance.

"I do seem quite well," he agreed surprisingly. "Honora, I'm the next thing to fifty. Would any one guess it?"

This was a new aspect of Paret's, and she studied him keenly, with the slightly satirical mouth inherited from her father. Embarrassment became evident at his exhibition of trivial pride, and nothing more was said until, winding through the gloom of Cottarsport, they had reached her house. Inside there was a wide hall with the stair mounting on the right under a panelled arch. Mrs. Cozzens, Honora's aunt and companion, was in the drawing room when they entered, and greeted Paret Fifield with the simple friendliness which, clearly without disagreeable intent, she reserved for an unquestionable few.

After dinner, the elder woman winding wool from an ivory swift clamped to a table, Honora thought

that Paret had never been so vivacious; positively he was silly. For no comprehensible reason her mind turned to Jason Burrage, striding with a lowered head, in his incongruous clothes, through the town of his birth.

"I wonder, Paret," she remarked, "if you remember two men who went from here to California about ten years ago? Well, one of them is back with his pockets full of gold, and a silk hat. He was engaged to Olive Stanes . . . I suppose their wedding will happen at any time. You see, he was faithful like yourself, Paret."

The man's back was toward her; he was examining, as he had on every visit Honora could recall, the curious objects in a lacquered cabinet brought from over-seas by Ithiel Canderay, and it was a noticeably long time before he turned. Mrs. Cozzens, the shetland converted into a ball, rose and announced her intention of retiring; a thin, erect figure in black moiré with a long countenance and agate-brown eyes, seed pearls, gold-band bracelets, and a Venise point cap.

When she had gone the silence in the room became oppressive. Honora was thinking of her life in connection with Paret Fifield, wondering if she could ever bring herself to marry him. She would have to decide soon: it seemed incredible that he was nearing fifty. Why, it must have been fifteen years ago when he first——

"Honora," he pronounced, leaning forward in

his chair, "I came prepared to tell you a particular thing, but I find it much more difficult than I had anticipated."

"I know," she replied, and her voice, the fact she pronounced, seemed to come from a consciousness other than hers; "you are going to get married."

"Exactly," he said with a deep, relieved sigh.

She had on a dinner dress looped with a silk ball fringe, and her fingers automatically played with the hanging ornaments as she studied him with a composed face.

"How old is she, Paret?" Honora asked presently.

He cleared his throat in an embarrassed manner.

"Not quite nineteen, I believe."

She nodded, and her expression grew imperceptibly colder. A slight but actual irritation at him, a palpable anger, shocked her, which she was careful to screen from her manner and voice. "You will be very happy, certainly. A young wife would suit you perfectly. You have kept splendidly young, Paret."

"She is really a superb creature, Honora," he proceeded gratefully. "I must bring her to you. But I am going to miss this." He indicated the grave chamber in which they sat, the white marble mantel and high mirror, the heavy mahogany settled back in half shadow, the dark velvet draperies of the large windows sweeping from alabaster cornices.

"Sometimes I feel like burning it to the ground," she asserted, rising. "I would if I could burn all that it signifies, yes, and a great deal of myself, too." She raised her arms in a vivid, passionate gesture. "Leave it all behind and sail up to Java Head and through the Sunda Strait, into life."

After the difficulty of his announcement Paret Fifield talked with animation about his plans and approaching marriage. Honora wondered at the swiftness with which she—for so long a fundamental part of his thought—had dropped from his mind. It had the aspect of a physical act of seclusion, as if a door had been closed upon her, the last, perhaps, leading out of her isolation. She hadn't been at all sure that she would not marry Paret: to-day she had almost decided in favor of such a consummation of her existence.

A girl not quite nineteen! She had been only twenty when Paret Fifield had first danced with her. He had been interested immediately. It was difficult to her to realize that she was now thirty-five; soon forty would be upon her, and then a gray reach. She didn't feel any older than she had, well—on the day that Jason Burrage departed for California. There wasn't a line on her face; no trace, yet, of time on her spirit or body; but the dust must inevitably settle over her as it did on a vase standing unmoved on a shelf. A vase was a tranquil object, well suited to glimmer from a corner through a decade; but she was different. The

heritage of her father's voyaging stirred in her together with the negation that held her stationary. A third state, a hot rebellion, poured through her, while she listened to Paret's facile periods. Really, he was rather ridiculous about the girl. She was conscious of the dull pounding of her heart.

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The morning following was remarkably warm and still; and, after Paret Fifield had gone, Honora made her way slowly down to the bay. The sunlight lay like thick yellow dust on the warehouses and docks, and the water filled the sweep of Cottar's Neck with a solid and smoothly blue expanse. A fishing boat, newly arrived, was being disgorged of partly cured haddock. The cargo was loaded into a wheelbarrow, transferred to the wharf, and there turned into a basket on a weighing scale, checked by a silent man in series of marks on a small book, and carried away. Beyond were heaped corks and spread nets and a great reel of fine cord.

When Honora walked without an objective purpose she always came finally to the water. It held no surprise for her; there was practically nothing she was directly interested in seeing. She stood—as at present—gazing down into the tide clasping the piles, or away at the horizon, the Narrows opening upon the sea. She exchanged unremarkable sentences with familiar figures, watched the men swab decks or tail new cordage through blocks, and

looked up absently at the spars of the schooners lying at anchor.

She had put on a summer dress again of white India barège, a little hat with a lavender bow, and she stood with her silk shawl on an arm. The stillness of the day was broken only by the creak of the wheelbarrow. Last night she had been rebellious, but now a lassitude had settled over her: all emotion seemed blotted out by the pouring yellow light of the sun.

At the side of the wharf a small warehouse held several men in the office, the smoke of pipes lifting slowly from the open door; and, at the sound of footfalls, she turned and saw Jem Stanes entering the building. His expression was surprisingly morose. It was, she thought again as she had of Jason Burrage striding darkly along the street, singularly inopportune at the arrival of so much good fortune. A burr of voices, thickened by the salt spray of many sea winds, followed. She heard laughter, and then Jem's voice, indistinguishable but sullenly angry.

Honora progressed up into the town, walked past the courthouse square, and met Jason at the corner of the street. "I am glad to have a chance to welcome you," she said, extending her hand. Close to him her sense of familiarity faded before the set face, the tightly drawn lips and hard gaze. She grew a little embarrassed. He had on another, still more surprising waistcoat, his watch chain was pon-

derous with gold; but dust had accumulated unattended on his shoulders, and dimmed the luster of his boots.

"Thank you," he replied non-committally, giving her palm a brief pressure. He stood silently, without cordiality, waiting for what might follow.

"You are safely back with the Golden Fleece," she continued more hurriedly, "after yoking the fiery bulls and sailing past the islands of the sirens."

"I don't know about all that," he said stolidly.

"Jason and the Argonauts," she insisted, conscious of her stupidity. He was far more compelling than she had remembered, than he appeared from a distance: the marked discontent of his earlier years had given place to a certain power, repose: the romance which she had decided was his main characteristic was emphasized. She was practically conversing with a disconcerting stranger.

"Olive was, of course, delighted," she went resolutely on. "You must marry soon, and build a mansion."

"We are not going to marry at all," he stated baldly.

"Oh——!" she exclaimed and then crimsoned with annoyance at the involuntary syllable. That idiot, Olive Stanes, she added to herself instantly. Honora could think of nothing appropriate to say. "That's a great pity," she temporized. Why didn't the boor help her? Hadn't he the slightest conception of the obligations of polite existence? He

stood motionless, the fingers of one hand clasping a jade charm. However, she, Honora Canderay, had no intention of being affronted by Jason Burrage.

"You must find it pale here after California, if what I've heard is true," she remarked crisply, then nodded and left him. That night at supper she repeated the burden of what he had told her to her aunt. The latter answered in a measured voice without any trace of interest:

"I thought something of the kind had happened: the upstairs girl was saying he was drunk last night. A habit acquired West, I don't doubt. It is remarkable, Honora, how you remember one from another in Cottarsport. They all appear indifferently alike to me. And I am tremendously upset about Paret."

"Well, I'm not," Honora returned. She spoke inattentively, and she was surprised at the truth she had exposed. Paret Fifield had never become a necessary part of her existence. Except for the light he had shed upon herself—the sudden glimpse of multiplying years and the emptiness of her days —his marriage was unimportant. She would miss him exactly as she might a piece of furniture that had been removed after forming a familiar spot. She was more engrossed in what her aunt had told her about Jason.

He had been back only two or three days, and already lost his promised wife and got drunk. The implications of drinking were different in Cottars-

port from what they would be in San Francisco, or even Boston; in such a small place as this every act offered the substance for talk, opinion, as long-lived as the elms on the hills. It was foolish of him not to go away for such excesses. Honora wanted to tell him so. She had inherited her father's attitude toward the town, she thought, a personal care of Cottarsport as a whole, necessarily expressed in an attention toward individual acts and people. She wished Jason wouldn't make a fool of himself. Then she recalled how ineffectual the same desire, actually voiced, had been in connection with Olive Stanes. She recalled Olive's horrified face as she, Honora, had said, "Grace be damned!" It was all quite hopeless. "I think I'll move to the city," she informed her aunt.

The latter sighed, from, Honora knew, a sense of superior knowledge and resignation.

After supper she deserted the more familiar drawing room for the chamber across the wide hall. A fire of coals was burning in an open grate, but there was no other light. Honora sat at a piano with a ponderous ebony case, and picked out Violetta's first aria from Traviata. The round sweet notes seemed to float away palpable and intact into the gloom. It was an unusual mood, and when it had gone she looked back at it in wonderment and distrust. Her customary inner rebellion reëstablished itself perhaps more vigorously than before: she was charged with energy, with vital promptings,

but found no opportunity, promise, of expression or accomplishment.

The warm sun lingered for a day or so more, and then was obliterated by an imponderable bank of fog that rolled in through the Narrows, over Cottar's Neck, and changed even the small confines of the town into a vast labyrinth. That, in turn, was dissipated by a swinging eastern storm, tipped with hail, which left stripped trees on an ashen blue sky and dark, frigid water slapping uneasily at the harbor edge.

Honora Canderay's states of mind were as various and similar.

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Her outer aspect, however, unlike the weather, showed no evidence of change: as usual she drove in the carriage on afternoons when it was not too cold; she appeared, autocratic and lavish, in the shops of Citron Street; she made her usual aimless excursions to the harbor. Jem Stanes, she saw, was still a deck hand on the schooner *Gloriana.* Looking back to the morning when he had scowlingly entered the office on the wharf, she was able to reconstruct the cause of his ill humor—a brother-in-law to Jason Burrage was a person of far different employment from an ordinary Stanes. She passed Olive on the street, but the latter, except for a perfunctory greeting, hurried immediately by.

The stories of Jason's reckless conduct multiplied

—he had consumed a staggering amount of Medford rum and, in the publicity of noon and Marlboro Street, sat upon the now notable silk hat. He had paid for some cheroots with a pinch of gold dust as they were said to do in the Far West. He carried a loaded derringer, and shot "for fun" the jar of colored water in the apothecary's window, and had threatened, with a grim face, to do the same for whoever might interfere with his pleasures. He was, she learned, rapidly becoming a local scandal and menace.

If it had been any one but Jason Burrage, native born and folded in the glamor of his extraordinary fortune, he would have been immediately and roughly suppressed: Honora well knew the rugged and severe temper of the town. As it was he went about—attended by its least desirable element, a chorus to magnify his liberality and daring—in an atmosphere of wonderment and excited curiosity.

This, she thought, was highly regrettable. Yet, in his present frame of mind, what else was there for him to do? He couldn't be expected to take seriously, be lost in, the petty affairs of Cottarsport; beyond a limited amount the gold for which he had endured so much—she had heard something of his misfortunes and struggle—was useless here; and without balance, he must inevitably drift into still greater debauch in the large cities.

He was now a frequently recurring figure in her thought. In the correct presence of her aunt, Mrs.

Cozzens, in delicate clothes and exact surroundings, the light of an astral lamp on her sharply cut, slightly contemptuous face, she would consider the problem of Jason Burrage. In a way, which she had more than once explained and justified to herself, she felt responsible for him. If there had been anything to suggest, she would have gone to him directly, but she had no intention of offering a barren condemnation. Her peculiar position in Cottarsport, while it indicated certain obligations, required the maintenance of an impersonal plane. Why, he might say anything to her; he was quite capable of telling her—and correctly—to go to the devil!

A new analogy was created between Jason Burrage and herself: his advantage over her had broken down, they both appeared fast in untoward circumstances beyond their power to alleviate or shape. He had come back to Cottarsport in the precise manner in which she had returned from shorter but equally futile excursions. Jason had his money, which at once established necessities and made satisfaction impossible; and she had promptings, desires, that by reason of their mere being, allowed her contentment neither in the spheres of a social importance nor here in the quiet place where so much of her was rooted. As Honora Canderay gazed at her Aunt Herriot's hard, fine profile, the thought of her own, Honora Canderay's, resemblance to the returned miner carousing with the

dregs of the town brought a shade of ironic amusement to her countenance.

Honora left the house, walking, in the decline of a November afternoon. She had been busy in a small way, supervising the filling of camphor chests for the winter, and, intensely disliking any of the duties of domesticity, she was glad to escape into the still, cold open. Dusk was not yet perceptible, but the narrow, erratic ways of Cottarsport were filling with clear gray shadow. When, inevitably, she found herself at the harbor's edge, she progressed over a narrow wharf to its end. It had been wet, and there were patches of black, icy film; the water near by was gray-black, but about the bare thrust of Cottar's Neck it was green; the warehouses behind her were blank and deserted.

She had on a cloak lined with ermine, and she drew it closer about her throat at the frigid air lifting from the bay. Suddenly a flare of color filled the sombre space, a coppery glow that glinted like metal shavings on the water and turned Cottar's Neck red. Against the sunset the town was formless, murky; but the sky and harbor resembled the interior of a burnished kettle. The effect was extraordinarily unreal, melodramatic, and she was watching the color fade, when a figure wavered out of the shadows and moved insecurely toward her. At first she thought the stumbling progressions were caused by the ice: then she saw that it was Jason Burrage, drunk.

He wore the familiar suit of broadcloth, with no outer covering, and a rough hat pulled down upon his fixed gaze. She stood motionless while he approached, and then calmly met his heavy interrogation.

"Honora," he articulated, "Honora Canderay, one—one of the great Canderays of Cottarsport. Well, why don't you say something? Too set up for a civil, for a——"

"Don't be ridiculous, Jason," she replied crisply; "and do go home—you'll freeze out here as you are."

"One of the great Canderays," he reiterated, contemptuously. He came very close to her. "You're not much. Here they think you. . . . But I've been to California, and at the Jenny Lind . . . in silk like a blue bird, and sing——. Nobody ever heard of the Canderays in 'Frisco, but they know Jason Burrage, Burrage who had all the bad luck there was, and then struck it rich."

He swayed periously, and she put out a palm and steadied him. "Go back. You are not fit to be around."

Jason struck her hand down roughly. "I'm fitter than you are. What are you, anyway?" He caught her shoulder in vise-like fingers. "Nothing but a woman, that's all—just a woman."

"You are hurting me," she said fearlessly.

His grip tightened, and he studied her, his eyes inhuman in a stony, white face. "Nothing more than that."

"You are very surprising," she responded. "Do you know, I had never thought of it. And it's true; that is precisely what and all I am."

His expression became troubled; he released her, stepped back, slipped, and almost fell into the water. Honora caught his arm and dragged him to the middle of the wharf. "A dam' Canderay," he muttered. "And I'm better, Jason Burrage. Ask them at the El Dorado, or Indian Bar; but that's gone—the early days. All scientific now. We got the dead wood on gold . . . cyanide."

"Come home," she repeated brusquely, turning him, with a slight push, toward the town settled in darkness. It sent him falling forward in the direction she wished. Honora supported him, led him on. At intervals he hung back, stopped. His speech became confused; then, it appeared, his reason commenced slowly to return. The streets were empty; a lamp shone dimly on its post at a corner; she guided Jason round a sunken space.

Honora had no sense of repulsion; she was conscious of a faint pity, but her energy came dimly from that feeling of obligation, inherited, she told herself once more, from her father—their essential attitude to Cottarsport. At the same time she found herself studying his face with a personal curiosity. She was glad that it was not weak, that rum had been ineffectual to loosen its hardness. He now seemed capable of walking alone, and she stood aside.

Jason was at a loss for words; his lips moved, but inaudibly. "Keep away from the water," she commanded, "or from Medford rum. And, some evening soon, come to see me." She said this without premeditation, from an instinct beyond her searching.

"I can't do that," he replied in a surprisingly rational voice, "because I've lost my silk hat."

"There are hundreds for sale in Boston," she announced impatiently; "go and get another."

"That never came to me," he admitted, patently struck by this course of rehabilitation through a new high hat. "There was something I had to say to you, but it left my mind, about a—a gold fleece; it turned into something else, on the wharf."

"When you see me again." She moved farther from him, suddenly in a great necessity to be home. She left him, talking at her, and went swiftly through the gloom of Regent Street. Letting herself into the still hall, the amber serenity of lamplight in suave spaciousness, she swung shut the heavy door with a startling vigor. Then she stood motionless, the cape slipping from her shoulders in glistening and soft white folds about her arms, to the carpet. Honora wasn't faint, not for a moment had she been afraid of Jason Burrage, this was not a rebellion of over-strung nerves; yet a passing blindness, a spiritual shudder, possessed her. She had the sensation of having just passed through an overwhelming adventure: yet all that had happened

was commonplace, even sordid. She had met a drunken man whom she hardly knew beyond his name and an adventitious fact, and insisted on his going home. Asking him to call on her had been little less than perfunctory—an impersonal act of duty.

Yet her being vibrated as if a loud and disturbing bell had been unexpectedly sounded at her ear; she was responding to an imperative summons. In her room, changing for supper, this feeling vanished, and left her usual introspective humor. Jason had spoken a profound truth, which her surprise had recognized at the time, in reminding her that she was an ordinary woman, like, for instance, Olive Stanes. The isolation of her dignity had hidden that from her for a number of years. She had come to think of herself exclusively as a Canderay.

Later her sharp enjoyment in probing into all pretensions, into herself, got slightly the better of her. "I saw Jason Burrage this evening," she told Mrs. Cozzens.

"If he was sober," that individual returned, "it might be worth recalling."

"But he wasn't. He nearly fell into the harbor. I asked him to see us."

"With your education, Honora, there is really no excuse for confusing the singular and plural. I haven't any doubt you asked him here, but that has nothing to do with us."

"You might be amused by his accounts of Cali-

fornia. For, although you never complain, I can see that you think it dull."

"I am an old woman," Herriot Cozzens stated, "my life was quite normally full, and I am content here with you. Any dullness you speak of I regret for another reason."

"You are afraid I'll get preserved like a salted haddock. He may not come."

. . . . . .

Honora was in the less formal of the drawing rooms when Jason Burrage was announced. He came forward almost immediately, in the most rigorous evening attire, a new silk hat on his arm.

"You had no trouble getting one," she nodded in its direction.

"Four," he replied tersely.

Jason took a seat facing her across an open space of darkly flowered carpet, and Honora studied him, directly critical. Against a vague background his countenance was extraordinarily pronounced, vividly pallid. His black hair swept in a soft wave across a brow with indented temples, his nose was short with wide nostrils, the lower part of his face square. His hands, scarred and discolored, rested each on a black-clad knee.

She was in no hurry to begin a conversation which must either be stilted, uncomfortable, or reach beyond known confines. For a moment her daring was passive. Jason Burrage stirred his feet, and

she attended the movement with thoughtful care. He said unexpectedly:

"I believe I've never been in here before." He turned and studied his surroundings as if in an effort of memory. "But I talked to your father once in the hall."

"Nothing has been changed," she answered almost unintelligibly. "Very little does in Cottarsport."

"That's so," he assented. "I saw it when I came back. It was just the same, but I——" he stopped and his expression became gloomy.

"If you mean that you were different, you are wrong," she declared concisely. "Just that has made trouble for you—you have been unable to be anything but yourself. I am like that, too. Every one is."

"I have been through things," he told her enigmatically. "Why look—just the trip: to Chagres on the Isthmus, and then mules and canoes through that ropey woods to Panama, with thousands of prospectors waiting for the steamer. Then back by Mazatlan, Mexico City, and Vera Cruz. A man sees things."

Her inborn uneasiness at rooms, confining circumstance, her restless desire for unlimited horizons, for the mere fact of reaching, moving, stirred into being at the names he repeated. To-morrow she would go away, find something new——

"It must have been horridly rough and dirty."

"A good many turned back or died," he agreed

tentatively. "But after you once got there a sort of craziness came over you—you couldn't wait to buy a pan or shovel. The bay was full of rotting ships deserted by their crews, a thicket of masts with even the sails still hanging to them. The men jumped overboard to get ashore and pick up gold."

She thought with a pang of the idle ships with sprung rigging, sodden canvas lumpily left on the decks, rotting as he had said, in files. The image afflicted her like a physical pain, and she left it hurriedly. "But San Francisco must have been full of life."

"You had to shout to be heard over the bands, and everything blazing. Pyramids of nuggets on the gambling tables. Gold dust and champagne and mud."

"Whatever will you find here?" She immediately regretted her query, which seemed to search improperly into the failure of his marriage.

"I'm thinking of going back," he admitted.

Curiously Honora was sorry to hear this; unreasonably it gave to Cottarsport a new aspect of barrenness, the vista of her own life reached interminable and monotonous into the future. And she was certain that, without the necessity and incentive of labor, it would be destructive for Jason to return to San Francisco.

"What would you do?"

"Gamble," he replied cynically.

"Admirable prospect," she said lightly. Her

manner unmistakably conveyed the information that his call had drawn to an end. He clearly resisted this for a minute or two, and then stirred.

"You must come again."

"Why?" he demanded abruptly, grasping his hat, which had reposed on the carpet at his side.

"News from California, from the world outside, is rare in Cottarsport. You must see that you are an interesting figure to us."

"Why?" he persisted, frowning.

She rose, her face as hard as his own, but with a faint smile in place of his lowering expression. "No, you haven't changed; not even to the extent of a superficial knowledge of drawing rooms."

"I ought to have seen better than come."

"The ignorance was all my own."

"But once——" he paused.

"Should be enough." Her smile widened. Yet she was furious with herself for having quarreled with him; the descent from the altitude of the Canderays had been enormous. What extraordinary influence had colored her acts in the past few days?"

Mrs. Cozzens, at breakfast, inquired placidly how the evening before had progressed, and Honora made a gesture expressive of its difficulties. "You will create such responsibilities for yourself," the elder stated.

This one, it suddenly appeared to Honora, had been thrust upon her. She made repeated and

angry efforts to put Jason Burrage from her mind; but his appearance sitting before her, his words and patent discontent, flooded back again and again. She realized now that he was no impersonal problem; somehow he had got twisted into the fibres of her existence; he was more vividly in her thoughts than Paret Fifield had ever been. She attempted to ridicule him mentally, and called up pictures of his preposterous clothes, the ill-bred waistcoats and ponderous watch chain. They faded before the memory of the set jaw, his undeniable romance.

Wrapped in fur, she elected to drive after dinner; the day was cold but palely clear, and she felt that her cheeks were glowing with unusual color. Above the town, on the hills now sere with frost and rock, the horses, under the aged guidance of Coggs, continually dropped from a jog trot to an ambling walk. Honora paid no attention to the gait, she was impervious to the wide, glittering reach of water; and she was startled to find herself abreast a man gazing at her.

"I made a jackass out of myself last night," he observed gloomily.

She automatically stopped the carriage and held back the buffalo robe. Jason hesitated, but was forced to take a seat at her side. Honora said nothing, and the horses again went forward.

"I'd been drinking a lot and was all on edge," he volunteered further. "I feel different to-day. I can remember your mother driving like this. I was

a boy then, and used to think she was made of ice; wondered why she didn't run away in the sun."

"Mother was very kind, really," Honora said absently. She was relaxed against the cushions, the country dipped and spread before her in a restful brown garb; she watched Coggs's glazed hat sway against the sky. The old sense of familiarity with Jason Burrage came back: why not, since she had known him all their lives? And now, after his years away, she was the only one in Cottarsport who at all comprehended his difficulties. He was not commonplace, a strong man was never that; and, in a way, he had the quality which more than any other had made her father so notable. And he was not unpleasant so close beside her. That was of overwhelming importance in the formation of her intimate opinion of him. He had been refined by the bitterness of his early failure in California; he bore himself with a certain dignity.

"What'll I do?" he demanded abruptly.

For the life of her she couldn't tell him. Except for platitudes she could offer no solution against the future. Actual living, directly viewed, was like that—hopeless of exterior solution. "I don't know," she admitted, "I wish I did; I wish I could help you."

"This money, what's it good for? I can't get my family to burn two small stoves at once; they'd die in the kitchen if they had a hundred parlors; I've bought more clothes than I'll ever wear, four

high hats and so on. Not going to get married; no use for a big house, for anything more than the room I have. I get plenty to eat——"

"You might do some good with it," she suggested. The base of what she was saying, Honora realized, was that he would be as well off with his fortune given away. Yet it was unjust, absurd, for him not to get some use, pleasure, from what he had worked so extravagantly to obtain.

"Somehow that wouldn't settle anything, for me," he replied.

Coggs had turned at the usual limit of her afternoon driving, and they were slowly moving back to the town. Cottar's Neck was fading into the early gloom, and a group of men stared at Jason seated in the Canderays' carriage as if their eyes were being played with in the uncertain light.

"Have you thought any more about going West?" she inquired.

They had stopped for his descent at Marlboro Street, and he stood with a hand on the wheel. "I had intended to go this morning."

He held her gaze steadily, and she felt a swift coldness touch her into a shiver.

"To-morrow?" This came in a spirit of perversity against her every other instinct.

"Shall I?"

"Would you be happier in San Francisco?"

Jason Burrage made a hopeless gesture.

". . . for supper," Honora found herself

saying in a rush; "at six o'clock. If you aren't bound for California."

She tried to recall afterward if she had indicated a particular evening for the invitation. There was a vague memory of mentioning Thursday. This was Tuesday . . . Herriot Cozzens would be in Boston.

. . . . . —.

A servant told her that Mr. Burrage had arrived when she was but half ready. She was, in reality, undecided in her choice of a dress for the evening; but finally she wore soft white silk, with deep, knotted fringe on the skirt, a low cut neck, and a narrow mantle of black velvet. Her hair, severely plain in its net, was drawn back from a bang cut across her brow. As she entered the room where he was standing a palpable admiration marked his countenance.

He said nothing, however, beyond a conventional phrase. Such natural reticence had a large part in her acceptance of him; he did nothing that actively disturbed her hypercritical being. He was almost distinguished in appearance. She had a feeling that if it had been different. . . . Honora distinctly wished for a flamboyant touch about him; it presented a symbol of her command of any situation between them, a reminder of her superiority.

The supper went forward smoothly; there were the welcome inevitable reminiscences of the rough fare of California, laughter at the prohibitive cost

of beans; and when, at her direction, he lighted a cheroot, and they lingered on at the table, Honora's aloofness was becoming a thing of the past. The smoke gave her an unexpected thrill, an extraordinary sense of masculine proximity. There had been no such blue clouds in the house since her father's death seven years ago. Settled back contentedly, Jason Burrage seemed—why, actually, he had an air of occupying a familiar place.

It was bitterly cold without, the room into which they trailed insufficiently warm, and they were drawn close together at an open Franklin stove. The lamps on the mantel were distant, and they had not yet been fully turned up: his face was tinged by the glow of the fire. An intense face. "What are you thinking about—me?" she added coolly. "Nothing," he replied; "I'm too comfortable to think." There was a note of surprise in his voice; he looked about as if to find reassurance of his present position. "But if I did it would be this—that you are entirely different from any woman I've ever known before. They have always been one of two kinds. One or the other," he repeated somberly. "Now you are both together. I don't know as I ought to say that, if it's nice. I wouldn't like to try and explain."

"But you must."

"It's your clothes and your manner put against what you are. Oh hell, what I mean is you're elegant to look at and good, too."

An expression of the deepest concern followed his exclamation. He commenced an apology. Hardly launched, it died on his lips.

Honora was at once conscious of the need for his contrition and of the fact that she had never heard a more entertaining statement. It was evident that he viewed her as a desirable compound of the women of the El Dorado and Olive Stanes: an adroit and sincere compliment. She wanted to follow it on and on, unfold its every exposition; but, of course, that was impossible. All this she concealed behind an indifferent countenance, her slim white fingers half embedded in the black mantle.

Jason Burrage lighted another cheroot and put his feet upon the polished brass railing of the iron hearth. This amused her beyond words. She couldn't remember when she had had another such vitalized evening. She realized that, through the last years, she had been appallingly lonely; but with Jason smoking beside her in a tilted chair the solitude was banished. She got a coal for him in the small burnished tongs, and he responded with a prodigious puff that set her to coughing.

When he had gone the house was hatefully vacant; as she went up to her chamber the empty spaciousness, the semi-dark well of the stair, the high hall with its low-turned lamp, the blackness of the third story pouring down over her, oppressed her almost beyond endurance. Her Aunt Herriot, already old, must be dead before very long, there

was none other of her connections who could live with her, and she would have to depend on perfunctory, hired companionship.

Honora saw that she should never escape from the influence which held her in Cottarsport.

In her room, the door bolted, it was no better. The interior was large, uncompromisingly square; and, though every possible light was burning, still it seemed sombre, menacing.

The following day was a lowering void with gusts of rain driving against the windows. Mrs. Cozzens would be away until to-morrow, and Honora met the afternoon alone. At times she embroidered, short-lived efforts broken by despondent and aimless excursions through the echoing halls.

She attempted to read, to compose herself with an elaborate gilt and embellished volume called "The Garland." But, at a Lamentation on the Death of Her Canary, by a Person of Quality, she deliberately dropped the book into the burning coals of the Franklin stove. The satisfaction of seeing the pages crisp and burst into flame soon evaporated. The day was a calamity, the approaching murky evening a horror.

At supper she wondered what Jason Burrage was doing. A trace of the odor of his cheroot lingered in the dining room. He was an astonishingly solid, the only actuality in a nebulous world of lofty, flickering ceilings and the lash of rain. He might as well smoke in her drawing room as in the Bur-

rage kitchen. Paret Fifield would have drifted naturally to the Canderay house, but not Jason, not a native of Cottarsport. . . . With an air of determination she sharply pulled the plush, tasseled bell rope in the corner.

. . . . . .

She heard the servant open the front door; there was a pause—Jason was taking off his greatcoat—after which he entered, calm and without query.

"I was tired of sitting by myself," she said with an air of entire frankness. In a minute or so more it was all as it had been the evening before—she held a coal for his cheroot as he tilted back beside her with his feet on the rail. "You are a very comfortable man, Jason," she told him.

He made no reply, although a quiver crossed his lips. Then, after a little, "It's astonishing how soon you get used to things. Seems as if I had been here for years, and this is only the third time."

"Have you thought any more of California?"

He faced her with an expression of surprise. "It had gone clean out of my mind. I suppose I will shift back, though—nothing here for me. I can't come to see you every evening."

She preserved a silence in which they both fell to staring into a dancing, bluish flame. The gusts of rain were audible like the tearing of heavy linen. An extraordinary idea had taken possession of Honora—if the day had been fine, if she had been out in a sparkling air and sun, a very great deal would

have happened differently. But just what she couldn't then say: the fact alone was all that she curiously apprehended.

"I suppose not," she answered, so long after his last statement that he gazed questioningly at her. "I wonder if it has occurred to you," she continued, "how much alike we are? I often think about it."

"Why, no," he replied, "it hasn't. Jason Burrage and Honora Canderay! I wouldn't have guessed it, and I don't believe any one else ever has. I'd have a hard time thinking about two more different. It's—it's ridiculous." He became seriously animated. "Here I am—well, you know all about me—with some money, perhaps, and a little of the world in my head; but you're Honora Canderay."

"You said once that I was nothing but a woman," she reminded him.

"I remember that," he admitted with evident chagrin. "I was drunk."

"That's when the truth is often hit on; I am quite an ordinary sort of woman."

He laughed indulgently.

"You said last evening I had some of a very common quality."

"Now you mustn't take that serious," he protested; "it was just in a way of speech. I told you I couldn't rightly explain myself."

"Anyhow," she asserted bluntly, "I am lonely. What will you do about it?"

His amazement turned into consternation which even now she found almost laughable. "Me?" he stammered. "There's no way I can help you. You are having a joke."

She realized, with a feeling that her knowledge came too late, that she was entirely serious. Jason Burrage was the only being alive who could give her any assistance, yes, save her from the future. Her hands were cold, she felt absolutely still, as if she had suddenly turned into marble, a statue with a heart slightly fluttering.

"You could be here a lot," she told him, and then paused, glancing at him swiftly with hard, bright eyes. He had removed his feet from the stove, and sat with his cheroot in a poised, awkward hand. She was certain that he would never speak.

"We might get married."

Honora was startled at the ease with which the words were pronounced, and conscious of an absurdly trivial curiosity—she wondered just how much he had been shocked by her proposal? She saw that he was stupefied. Then:

"So we might," he pronounced idiotically. "There isn't any real reason why we shouldn't. That is——." He stopped. "Where does the laugh start?" he demanded.

Suddenly Honora was overwhelmed, not by what she had said, but by the whole difficulty and inner confusion of her existence. She turned away her head with an unintelligible period. A silence fol-

lowed, intensified by the rain flinging against the glass.

"It's a bad night," he muttered.

The banality saved her. Again practically at her ease, she regarded him with slightly smiling lips. "I believe I've asked you to marry me," she remarked.

"Thank you," said Jason Burrage. He stood up. "If you mean it, I'd like to very much."

"You'd better sit down," she went on in an impersonal voice; "there ought to be a lot of things to arrange. For instance, hadn't we better live on here, for a while anyhow? It's a big house to waste."

"Honora, you'll just have to stop a little," he asserted; "I'm kind of lost. It was quick in California, but that was a funeral procession compared with you."

Now that it was done, she was frightened. But there was time to escape even yet. She determined to leave the room quickly, get away to the safety of her bolted door, her inviolable privacy. She didn't stir. An immediate explanation that she hadn't been serious—how could he have thought it for a moment!—would save her. But she was silent.

A sudden enthusiasm lighted up his immobile face. "I'll get the prettiest diamond in Boston," he declared.

"You mustn't——" she commenced, struggling still to retreat. He misunderstood her.

"The very best," he insisted.

When he had gone she remained seated in the formal chamber. At any rate she had conquered the emptiness of her life, of the great square house above her. It was definitely arranged, they were to marry. How amazed Herriot Cozzens would be! It was probable that she would leave Cottarsport, and her, Honora, immediately. Jason hadn't kissed her, he had not even touched her hand, in going. He had been extremely subdued, except at the thought of the ring he would buy for her.

There were phases of the future which she resolutely ignored.

Mrs. Cozzens came back as had been planned, and Honora told her at once. The older woman expressed her feeling in contained, acid speech. "I am surprised he had the assurance to ask you."

"Jason didn't," Honora calmly returned.

"It's your father," the elder stated; "he had some very vulgar blood. I felt that it was a calamity when my sister accepted him. A Cottarsport person at heart, just as you are, always down about the water and those low docks."

"I'm sure you're right, and so it's much better for me to find where I belong. I have tried to get away from Cottarsport, and from the sea and the schooners sailing in and out of the Narrows, a thousand times. But I always come back, just as Father did, back to this little place from the entire world—China and Africa and New York. The other influences weren't strong enough, Aunt Her-

riot; they only made me miserable; and now I've killed them. I'll say good-bye to you and Paret and the cotillions." She kissed her hand, but not gaily, to a whole existence irrevocably lost.

With Jason's ring blazing on her slim finger she drove, the day before the wedding, for the last time as Honora Canderay. The leaves had been stripped from the elms on the hills, brown and barren against the flashing, steely water. She saw that Coggs was so impotent with age that if the horses had been more vigorous he would be helpless. Coggs had driven for her father, then her, for thirty years. It was too cold for the old man to be out to-day. His cheeks were dark crimson, and continually wet from his failing eyes.

Herriot Cozzens had left her; Coggs . . . all the intimate figures of so many years were vanishing. Jason remained. He had almost entirely escaped annoying her, and she was conscious of his overwhelming admiration, the ineradicable esteem of Cottarsport for the Canderays; but a question, a doubt more obscure than fear, was taking possession of her. After all she was supremely ignorant of life; she had been screened from it by pride and luxurious circumstance; but now she had surrendered all her advantage. She had given herself to Jason; and he was life, mysterious and rude. The thunder of large, threatening seas, reaching everywhere beyond the placid gulf below, beat faintly on her perception.

JASON

IN AN unfamiliar upper room of the Canderays' house Jason stood prepared for the signal to descend to his wedding. The ceremony was to occur at six o'clock; it was now only five minutes before—he had absently looked at his watch a great many times in a short space—and he was striving to think seriously of what was to follow. But in place of this he was passing again through a state of silent, incoherent surprise. This was the sort of thing for which a man might pinch himself to discover if he were awake or dreaming. In five, no, four, minutes now Honora Canderay was to become his, Jason Burrage's, wife.

A certain complacency had settled over him in the past few days, something of his inborn feeling of the Canderays as a house apart seemed to have evaporated; and, in addition, he had risen—Honora wouldn't take any just happen so. Jason was never notable for humility. Yet who, even after he had returned from California with his riches, could have predicted this evening? His astonishment was as much at himself, illuminated by extraordinary events, as at any exterior circumstance. At times he had the ability to see himself, as if from

the outside; and that view, here, was amazing. Why, only a short while ago he had been drinking rum in the shed in back of "Pack" Clower's house, perhaps the least desirable shed in Cottarsport.

Of one fact, however, he was certain—no more promiscuous draughts of Medford. He recognized that he had taken so much not from the presence of desire, but from a total absence of it as well as of any other mental state. "Pack" and his associates, too, were now a thing of the past, a bitterly rough and vacant element. The glass lamp on a bureau was smoking: he stepped forward to lower the wick, when a knock fell on the door. A young Boston relative of Honora's—a supercilious individual in checked trousers and lemon-colored gloves—announced that they were waiting for Jason below. With a determined settling of his shoulders and tightly drawn lips, he marched resolutely forward.

The marriage was to be in the chamber across from the one in which he had generally sat. Smilax and white Killarney roses had been bowed over the mantel at the farthest end, and there Jason found the clergyman waiting. The room was half full of people occupying chairs brought from other parts of the house; and he was conscious of a sudden silence, an intent, curious scrutiny, as he entered. An instinctive antagonism to this deepened in him: he felt that, with the exception of his father and mother, he hadn't a friend in the room. Such other local figures as were there were facilely imitating

the cold stare of Honora's connections. He stood belligerently facing Mrs. Cozzens's glacial calm, the inspection of a man he had seen driving with Honora in Cottarsport, now accompanied by a pettish, handsome girl, evidently his wife. His father's weathered countenance, sunken and dry on its bones, was blank, except for a faint doubt, as if some mistake had been made which would presently be exposed, sending them about face. His mother, however, was trumphant pride and justification personified. Then the music commenced—a harp, violin, and double bass.

The wedding ring firmly secured, Jason stirred with a feeling of increasing awkwardness. He glared back, with a protruding lip, at the fellow with the young wife, at the small, aggressive group from Boston; and then he saw that Honora was in the room. She was coming slowly toward him. Her expression of absolute unconcern released him from all petty annoyance, any thought of the malicious onlookers. As she stopped at his side she gave him a slight nod and smile; and at that moment a tremendous, sheer admiration for her was born in him.

Honora had chosen to be unattended—she had coolly observed that she was well beyond the age for such sentimentality—and he realized that though the present would have been a racking occasion for most women, it was evident that she was not disturbed in the least. He had a general

impression of sugary white satin, of her composed, almost disdainful face in a cloud of veil with little waxen orange flowers, of slender still hands, when they turned from the room to the minister.

They had gone over the marriage service together, he had read it again in the kitchen at home; he was fairly familiar with its periods and responses, and got through with only a slight hesitation and half prompting. But the thickness of his voice, in comparison with Honora's open, decisive utterance, vainly annoyed him. He wanted desperately to clear his throat. Suddenly it was over, and Honora, in a swirl of satin, was sinking to her knees. Beside her he listened with a feeling of comfortable lull to a lengthy prayer.

Rising, he perfunctorily clasped a number of indifferent palms, replied inanely to gabbled expressions of good will and hopes for the future unmistakably pessimistic in tone. Honora told him in a rapid aside the names of those approaching. She smiled radiantly at his father and mother, leaned forward and whispered in the latter's ear; and they followed the guests streaming into the dining room.

There champagne was being opened by the caterer's assistants from Boston. There were steaming platters of terrapin and oysters and fowl. The table bore pyramids of nuts and preserved fruit, hot Cinderellas in cups with sugar and wine, black case cake, Savoy biscuits, pumpkin paste, and frothed creams with preserved peach leaves. A laden plate

was thrust into Jason's hand, and he sat with it in a clatter of voices and topics that completely ignored him. He was isolated in the absorption of food and wine, in a conversational exchange as strange to him as if it had been spoken in a foreign language.

Honora was busily talking to young Mrs. Fifield —he remembered the name now. Apparently she had forgotten his existence. At first this annoyed him; he determined to force his way into their attention, but a wiser realization held him where he was. Honora was exactly right: he had nothing in common with these people, probably not one of them would come into his life or house again. And his wife, in the fact of her marriage, had clearly signified how little important they were to her. His father joined him.

"You made certain when the New York packet leaves?" he queried.

"Everything's fixed," Jason reassured him.

"Your mother wanted to see you. But she got set and is kind of timid about moving." Jason rose promptly, and, with the elder, found Mrs. Hazzard Burrage. "I'd like to have Honora, too," the latter told them, and Jason turned sharply to find her. When they stood facing the old couple his mother hesitated doubtfully; then she put out her hand to the woman in wedding array. But Honora ignored it; leaning forward she kissed the round, bright cheek.

"You have to be patient with them at times," the mother said, looking up anxiously.

"I'm afraid Jason will need that warning," Honora replied; "he is a very imprudent man."

. . . . . .

Jason's mind returned to this later, sitting in the house that had been the Canderays', but which now was his too. Honora's remark to his mother had been clear in itself, but it suggested wide speculations beyond his grasp. For instance—why, after all, had Honora married him? He was forced to acknowledge that it was not the result of any overwhelming feeling for him. The manner of their wedding, the complete absence of the emotion supposed to be the incentive of such consummations, Honora herself, all, denied any effort to fix such a personally satisfactory cause. That she might have had no other opportunity—Honora was not so young as she had been—he dismissed as obviously absurd. Why——

His gaze was fastened upon the carpet, and he saw that time and the passage of feet had worn away the design. He looked about the room, and was surprised to discover a general dinginess which he had never noticed before. He said nothing, but, in his movements about the house, examined the furnishings and walls, and an astonishing fact was thrust upon him—the celebrated dwelling was grievously run down. It was plain that no money had been spent on it for years. The carriage, too,

and the astrakhan collar on Coggs's coat, were worn out.

He considered this at breakfast—his wife behind a tall Sheffield coffee urn—and he was aware of the cold edge of a distasteful possibility. The thought enveloped him insidiously, like the fog which often rolled through the Narrows and over the town, that the Canderays were secretly impoverished, and Honora had married him only for his money. Jason was not resentful of this in itself, since he had been searching for a motive he could accept, but it struck him in a peculiarly vulnerable spot—his admiration for his wife, for Honora. The idea, although he assured himself that the thing was readily comprehensible, somehow managed to diminish her, to tarnish the luster she held for him. It was far beneath the elevation on which Cottarsport had placed the Canderays; and he suffered a distinct sense of loss, a feeling of the staleness and disappointment of living.

The more he considered this explanation the more he was convinced of its probability. A great deal of his genuine warmth in his marriage evaporated. Still—Honora had married him, she had given herself in return for what material advantage he might bring; and he would have to perform his part thoroughly. He ought to have known that——

What he must do now was to save them both from any painful revelation by keeping for ever hid that he was aware of her purpose, he must never

expose himself by a word or act; and he must make her understand that whatever he had was absolutely hers. It would be necessary for her to go to the money with entire freedom and without any accounting.

This, he found, was not so easy to establish as he thought. Honora was his wife, but nevertheless there was a well marked reticence between them, a formal nicety with which he was heartily in accord. He couldn't just thrust his fortune before her on the table. He hesitated through the day, on the verge of various blunders; and then, in the evening, said in a studied casuality of manner:

"What do you think about fixing some of the rooms over new? You might get tired of seeing the same things for so long. I saw real elegant furniture in Boston."

She looked about indifferently. "I think I wouldn't like it changed," she remarked, almost in the manner of a defense. "I suppose it does seem worn to you; but I'm used to it; there are so many associations. I am certain I'd be lost in new hangings."

Jason was so completely silenced by her reply that he felt he must have shown some confusion, for her gaze deliberately turned to him. "Is there any particular thing you would like repaired?" she inquired.

"No, of course not," he said hastily. "I think it's splendid. I wouldn't change a curtain, only—

but. . . ." He cursed himself for a clumsy fool while Honora continued to study him. He endeavored to shield himself behind the trival business of lighting a cheroot; but he felt Honora's query searching him out. Finally, to his extreme dismay, he heard her say:

"Jason, I believe you think I married you for money!"

Pretense, he realized, would be no good now.

"Something like that did occur to me," he acknowledged desperately.

"Really," she told him sharply. "I could be cross very easily. You are too stupid. Father did wonderfully well on his voyages, and his profit was invested by Frederic Cozzens, one of the shrewdest financiers of his day. I have twice, probably three times, as much as you."

She confronted him with a faintly sparkling resentment. However, the pleasure, the reassurance, in what he had just heard made him indifferent to the rest. It was impossible now to comprehend how he had been such a block! He even smiled at her, which, he was delighted to observe, obviously puzzled her.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you, Jason, and perhaps it is too late already, that I thought I married you because I was lonely, because I feared the future. Anyhow, that's what I told myself the night I sent for you. You might have a right to complain very bitterly about it."

"If I have, I won't," he assured her cheerfully.

"I thought that then; but now I am not at all sure. It no longer seems so simple, so easily explained. I used to feel that I understood myself very thoroughly, I could look inside and see what was there; but in the last month I haven't been able to; and it is very disturbing."

"Anyhow we're married," he announced comfortably.

"That's a beautiful way to feel," she remarked. "I appear to get less sure of things as I grow older, which is pathetic."

He wondered what, exactly, she meant by this. Honora said a great many little things which, their meaning escaping him, gave him momentary doubts. He discovered that she had a habit of saying things indirectly, and that, as the seriousness of the occasion increased, her manner became lighter and he could depend less on the mere order of her words. This continually disconcerted him, put him on the defensive and at small disadvantages: he was never quite at ease with Honora.

Obversely—the ugly shade of mercenary purpose dispelled—close at hand his admiration for her grew. Every detail of her living was as fine as that publicly exposed in the drawing room. She was not rigidly and impossibly perfect, in, for instance, the inflexible attitude of Olive Stanes; Honora had a very human impatience, she could be disagreeable, he found, in the morning, and she un-

doubtedly felt herself superior to the commonalty of life. But in the ordering of her person there was a wonderfully exact delicacy and fragrant charm. Just as she had no formal manner, so, he discovered, she possessed no "good" clothes; she dressed evidently from some inner necessity, and not merely for the sake of impression. She had, too, a remarkable vigor of expression; Honora was not above swearing at contradictory circumstance; and she was so free of small pruderies that often she became a cause of embarrassment to him. At times he would tell himself uneasily that her conduct was not quite ladylike; but at the same instant his amusement in her would mount until it threatened him with laughter.

There was a great deal to be learned from Honora, he told himself; and then he would speculate whether he were progressing in that acquisition; and whether she were happy; no, not happy, but contented. Ignorant of her reason for marrying, he vaguely dreaded the possibility of its departure, mysterious as it had come, leaving her regarding him with surprise and disdain. He tried desperately, consciously, to hold her interest and esteem. That was the base of his conception of their married existence, which, then, he was entirely willing to accept.

. . . . . .

However, as the weeks multiplied without bringing him any corresponding increase in the knowl-

edge of either Honora or their true situation, he was aware of a disturbance born of his very pleasure in her; an uncomfortable feeling of insecurity fastened upon him. But all this he was careful to keep hidden. There was evidently no doubt in the minds of Cottarsport of the enviableness of his position—with all that gold, wedded to Honora Canderay, living in the Canderay mansion. The more solid portion of the town gave him a studied consideration denied to the mere acquisition of wealth; and the rough element, once his companion but now relentlessly held at a distance, regarded him with a loud disdain fully as humanly flattering. Sometimes with Honora he passed the latter, and they grumbled an obscure acknowledgment of his curt greeting; when he was alone, they openly disparaged his attainments and qualified pride.

There were "Pack" Clower, an able seaman whose indolent character had dissipated his opportunities of employment without harming his slow, powerful body; Emery Radlaw, the brother of the apothecary and a graduate of Williams College, a man of vanished refinements and taker of strange drugs, as thin and erratically rapid in movements as Clower was slow; Steven, an incredibly soiled Swede; John Vleet, the master and part owner of a fishing schooner, a capable individual on the sea, but an insanely violent drunkard on land. There were others, all widely different, but alike in the bitterness of a common failure and the habit of

assuaging doubtful self-esteem, of ministering to crawling nerves, with highly potential stimulation.

Jason passed "Pack" and Emery Radlaw on a day of late March, and a mocking and purposely audible aside almost brought him to an adequate reply. He had disposed of worse men than these in California and the Isthmus. His arrogant temper rose and threatened to master him; but something more powerful held him steadily and silently on his way. This was his measureless admiration for Honora, his determination to involve her in nothing that would detract from her fineness and erect pride. Brawling on the street would not do for her husband. He must give her no cause to lessen what incomprehensible feeling, liking, she might have for him, give life to no regrets for a hasty and perhaps only half-considered act. After this, in passing any of his late temporary associates, he failed to express even the perfunctory consciousness of their being.

. . . . . .

In April he was obliged to admit to himself that he knew no more of Honora's attitude toward him than on the day of their wedding. He recognized that she made no show of emotion; it was an essential part of her to seem at all times unmoved. That was well enough for the face she turned toward the world; but directed at him, her husband, its enigmatic quality began to obsess his mind. What

Honora thought of him, why she had married him, became an almost continuous question.

It bred an increasing sense of instability that became loud, defiant. More than once he was at the point of self-betrayal: query, demand, objection, would rise on a temporary angry flood to his lips. But, struggling, behind a face as unmoved as Honora's own, he would suppress his resentment, the sense of injury, and smoke with the appearance of the greatest placidity.

His regard for his wife placed an extraordinary check on his impulses and utterance. He deliberated carefully over his speech, watched her with an attention not far from a concealed anxiety, and was quick to absorb any small conventions unconsciously indicated by her remarks. She never instructed or held anything over him; he would have been acutely sensitive to any air of superiority, and immediately antagonized. But Honora was entirely free from pretensions of that variety; she was as clear and honest as a goblet of water.

Jason's regard for her grew pace by pace with the feeling of baffling doubt. He was passing through the public square, and his thoughts were interrupted by a faint drifting sweetness. "I believe the lilacs are out," he said unconsciously aloud and stopping. His surrounding was remarkably serene, withdrawn —the courthouse, a small block of brick with white corniced windows, flat Ionic portico, and slatted wood lantern with a bell, stood in the middle of the

grassy common shut in by an irregular rectangle of dwellings with low eaves and gardens. The sun shone with a beginning warmth in a vague sky that intensified the early green. It seemed that he could see, against a house, the lavender blur of the lilac blossoms.

Then his attention was attracted by the figure of a man, at once strange and familiar, coming toward him with a dragging gait. Jason studied the other until a sudden recognition clouded his countenance, filled him with a swift, unpleasant surprise.

"Thomas!" he exclaimed. "Whenever did you get back?"

"Yesterday," said Thomas Gast.

Well, here was Thomas returned from California like himself. Yet the most negligent view of the latter revealed that there was a vast difference between Jason and this last Argonaut—Thomas Gast's loosely hung jaw, which gave to his countenance an air of irresolution, was now exaggerated by an aspect of utter defeat. His ill-conditioned clothes, sodden brogans and stringy handkerchief still knotted miner-fashion about his throat, all multiplied the fact of failure proclaimed by his attitude.

"How did you strike it?" Jason uselessly asked.

"What chance has the prospector to-day?" the other heatedly and indirectly demanded. "At first a man could pan out something for himself; but now it's all companies, all capital. The state's inter-

fered too, claims are being held up in court while their owners might starve; there are new laws and trimmings every week. I struck it rich on the Reys, but I was drove out before I could get my stakes in. They tell me you did good."

"At last," Jason replied.

"And married Honora Canderay, too."

The other assented shortly.

"Some are shot with luck," Thomas Gast proclaimed; "they'd fall and skin their face on a nugget."

"How did you come back?"

"Worked my passage in a crazy clipper with moon-sails and the halliards padlocked to the rail. Carried away the foretopmast and yard off the Horn and ran from port to port in a hundred and four days."

The conversation dwindled and expired. Thomas Gast gazed about moodily, and Jason, with a tight mouth, nodded and moved on. His mind turned back abruptly to Eddie Lukens, the man who had robbed him of his find in the early days of cradle mining, the man he had killed.

He had said nothing of this to Honora; the experience with Olive Stanes had convinced him of the advisability of keeping past accident where, he now repeated, it belonged. He despaired of ever being able, in Cottarsport, to explain the place and times that had made his act comprehensible. How could he picture, here, the narrow ravines cut by

swift rivers from the stupendous slopes and forests of the Sierra Nevada, the isolation of a handful of men with their tents by a plunging stream in a rift so deep that there would be only a brief glimmer of sunlight at noon? And, failing that, the ignorant could never grasp the significance of the stillness, the timeless shadows, which the miners penetrated in their madness for gold. They'd never realize the strangling passion of this search in a wilderness without habitation or law or safety. They could not understand the primary justice of such rude courts as the miners were able to maintain on the more populous outskirts of the region.

He, Jason Burrage, had been tried by a jury for killing Eddie Lukens, and had been exonerated. It had been months since he had reiterated this dreary and only half-satisfying formula. The inner necessity filled him with a shapeless concern such as might have been caused by a constant, unnatural shadow flickering out at his back. He almost wished that he had told Honora at the beginning; and then he fretfully cursed the incertitude of life —whatever he did appeared, shortly after, wrong. But it was obvious that he couldn't go to her with the story to-day; the only time for that had been before his marriage; now it would have the look of a confession of weakness, opportunely timed; and he could think of nothing more calculated to antagonize Honora than such a crumbling admission.

All this had been re-animated by the mere pres-

ence of Thomas Gast in Cottarsport; certainly, he concluded, an insufficient reason for his troubling. Gast had been a miner, too, he was familiar with the conditions in the West. . . . There was a great probability that he hadn't even heard of the unfortunate affair; while Olive Stanes would be dragged to death rather than garble a word of what he had told her: Jason willingly acknowledged this of Olive. He resolutely banished the whole complication from his mind; and, walking with Honora after supper over the garden in back of their house, he was again absorbed by her vivid delicate charm.

The garden was deep and narrow, a flight of terraces connected by a flagged path and steps. At the bottom were the bergamot pear trees that had been Ithiel Canderay's especial charge in his last, retired years. Their limbs, faintly blurred with new foliage, rose above the wall, against a tranquil evening sky with a white slip of May moon. The peace momentarily disturbed in Jason Burrage's heart flooded back, a sense of great well-being settled over him. Honora rested her hand within his arm at an inequality of the stone walk.

"I am really a very bad wife, Jason," she said suddenly; "self-absorbed and inattentive."

"You suit me," he replied inadequately. He was extraordinarily moved by her remark: she had never before even suggested that she was conscious of obligation. He wanted to put into words some of

the warmth of feeling which filled his heart, but suitable speech evaded him. He could not shake off the fear that such protestations might be displeasing to her restrained being. Moving slightly away from him she seemed, in the soft gloom, more wonderful than ever. Set in white against the depths of the garden, her face, dimly visible, appeared to be without its customary faintly mocking smile.

"Do you remember, Jason," she continued, "how I once said I thought I was marrying you because I was lonely, and that I found out it wasn't so? I didn't know why." She paused.

He was enveloped by an intense eagerness to hear her to the end: it might be that something beyond his greatest hopes was to follow. But disappointment overtook him.

"I was certain I'd see more clearly into myself soon, but I haven't; it's been useless trying. And I've decided to do this—to give up thinking about things for myself, and to wait for you to show me."

"But I can't do that," he protested, facing her; "more than half the time I wonder over almost that same question—why you ever married me?"

"This is a frightful situation," she observed with a return of her familiar manner; "two mature people joined for life, and neither with the slightest idea of the reason. Anyhow I have given it up. . . . I suppose I'll die in ignorance. Perhaps I was too old——"

He interrupted her with an uncustomary incivility, a heated denunciation of what she had been about to say.

"So you are not sorry," he remarked after a little.

"No," she answered slowly, "and I'm certain I shan't be. I'm not that sort of person. I would go down to ruin sooner than regret." She said no more, but went into the house, leaving Jason in the potent spring night.

There was no longer any doubt about the lilacs: the air was laden with their scent. An entire hedge of them must have blossomed as he was standing there. He moved to the terrace below: there might be buds on the pear trees. But it was impossible to see the limbs. How could Honora expect him to make their marriage clear? He had never before seen her face so serene. He thought that he heard a vague stir outside the wall, and he remembered the presence of a semi-public path. Now there was a cautious mutter of voices. He advanced a step, then stopped at a scrambling of shoes against the wall. A vague form shouldered into view, momentarily clinging above him, and a harsh voice cried:

"Murderer!"

. . . . . .

Even above the discordant clash of his startled sensibilities rose the fear, instantaneously born, that Honora had heard. All the vague uneasiness which had possessed him at Thomas Gast's return solidi-

fied into a recognizable, leaden dread—the conviction that his wife must learn the story of his misadventure, told with animus and lies. Then a more immediate dread held him rigidly attentive: there might be a second cry, a succession of them shouted discordantly to the sky. Honora would come out, the servants gather, while that accusing voice, indistinguishable and disembodied by the night, proclaimed his error. This was not the shooting of Eddie Lukens, but the neglect to comprehend Honora Canderay.

Absolute silence followed. He made a motion toward the wall, but, oppressed by the futility of such an act, arrested himself in the midst of a step and stood with a foot extended. The stillness seemed to thicken the air until he could hardly breathe; he was seized by a sullen anger at the events which had gathered to betray him. The crying tones had been like a chemical acting on his complexity, changing him to an entirely different entity, darkening his being; the peace and fragrance of the night were destroyed by the anxiety that now sat upon him.

Convinced that nothing more was to follow here, he was both impelled into the house, to Honora, and held motionless by the fear of seeing her turn toward him with her familiar light surprise and a question. However, he slowly retraced his way over the terraces, through a trellis hung with grape vines, and into the hall. As he hoped, Honora was on the

opposite side of the dwelling. She had heard nothing. Jason sat down heavily, his gaze lowered and sombre.

The feeling smote him that he should tell Honora of the whole miserable business at once, make what excuse for himself was possible, and prepare her for the inevitable public revelation. He pronounced her name, with the intention of doing this; but she showed him such a tranquil, superfine face that he was unable to proceed. Her interrogation held for a moment and then left him, redirected to a minute, colorful square of glass beads.

A multiplication of motives kept him silent, but principal among them was the familiar shrinking from appearing to his wife in any little or mean guise. It was precisely into such a peril that he had been forced. He felt, now, that she would overlook a murder such as the one he had committed far more easily than an intangible error of spirit. He could actually picture Honora, in his place, shooting Eddie Lukens; but he couldn't imagine her in his humiliating situation of a few minutes before.

He turned to the consideration of who it might be that had called over the wall, and immediately recognized that it was one of a small number, one of "Pack" Clower's gang: Thomas Gast would have gravitated quickly to their company, and their resentment of his, Jason Burrage's, place in life must have been nicely increased by Gast's jealousy. The latter, Jason knew, had not washed an honest

pan of gravel in his journey and search for a mythical easy wealth; he had hardly left the littered fringe of San Francisco, but had filled progressively menial places in the less admirable resorts and activities.

With so much established beyond doubt he was confronted by the necessity for immediate action, the possibility of yet averting all that threatened him, of preserving his good opinion in Honora's eyes. Clower and Emery Radlaw and the rest, with the balance of neither property nor position, lawless and inflamed with drink, were a difficult opposition. He repeated that he had mastered worse, but out in California, where a man had been nakedly a man; and then he hadn't been married. There he would have found them at once, and an explosion of will, perhaps of powder, would soon have cleared the atmosphere. But in Cottarsport, with so much to keep intact, he was all but powerless.

Yet, the following day, when he saw the apothecary's brother enter the combined drug and liquor store, he followed; and, to his grim satisfaction, found Thomas Gast already inside. The apothecary gave Jason an inhospitable stare, but the latter ignored him, striding toward Gast. "Just what is it you've brought East about me?" he demanded.

The other avoided the query, his gaze shifting over the floor. "Well?" Jason insisted, after a pause. Thomas Gast was leaning against a high

counter at one side, behind which shelves held various bottles and paper boxes and tins. The counter itself was laden with scales and a mortar, powders and vividly striped candy in tall glass jars.

"You know well as I do," Gast finally admitted.

"Then we're both certain there's no reason for name-calling over my back wall."

"You shot him, didn't you?" the other asked thinly. "You can't get away from the fact that you killed a pardner."

"I did," said Jason Burrage harshly. "He robbed me. But I didn't shout thief at him from the safety of the dark; it was right after dinner, the middle of the day. He was ready first, too; but I shot him. Can you get anything from that?"

"You ought to realize this isn't San Francisco," Radlaw, the drug taker, put in. "A man couldn't be coolly derringered in Cottarsport. There's law here, there's order." He had a harried face, dulled eyes under a fine brow, a tremulous flabby mouth, with white crystals of powder adhering to its corners, and a countenance like the yellow oilskins of the fisherman.

Jason turned darkly in his direction. "What have you or Clower got to do with law?"

"Not only them," the apothecary interposed, "but all the other men of the town are interested in keeping it orderly. We'll have no western rowdyism in Cottarsport."

"Then hear this," Jason again addressed Thomas

Gast; "see that you tell the truth and all the truth. My past belongs to me, and I don't aim to have it maligned by any empty liar back from the coast. And either of you Radlaws—I'm not going to be blanketed by the town drunkards or old women, either. If I have shot one man I can shoot another, and I care this much for your talk—if any of this muck is allowed to annoy Mrs. Burrage I'll kill whoever starts it, spang in the middle of day."

"That's where it gets him," the ex-scholar stated.

"Just there," Jason agreed; "and this Gast, who has brought so much back from California, can tell you this, too—that I had the name of finishing what I began."

But, once more outside, alone, his appearance of resolution vanished: the merest untraceable rumor would be sufficient to accomplish all that he feared, damage him irreparably with Honora. He was far older in spirit and body than he had been back on Indian Bar; he had passed the tumultuous years of living. The labor and privation, the continuous immersion in frigid streams, had lessened his vitality, sapped his ability for conflict. All that he now wished was the happiness of his wife, Honora, and the quietude of their big, peaceful house; the winter evenings by the Franklin stove and the spring evenings with the windows open and the candles guttering in the mild, lilac-hung air.

. . . . . .

Together with his uncertainty the pleasure in the sheer fact of his wife increased; and with it the old wonderment at their situation returned. What, for instance, did she mean by saying that he must explain her to herself? He tried again all the conventional reasons for marriage without satisfaction: the sentimental and material equally failed. Jason felt that if he could penetrate this mystery his grasp on actuality would be enormously improved; he might, with such knowledge, successfully defy Thomas Gast and all that past which equally threatened to reach out destructively into the future.

His happiness, in its new state of fragility, became infinitely precious; a thing to dwell on at nights, to ponder over walking through the town. Then, disagreeably aware of what overshadowed him, he would watch such passersby as spoke, searching for some sign of the spreading of his old fault. Often he imagined that he saw such an indication, and he would hurry home, in a panic of haste—which was, too, intense reluctance—to discover if Honora yet knew.

He approached her a hundred times determined to end his misery of suspense, and face the incalculable weight of her disdain; but on each occasion he failed as he had at first. Now his admission seemed too damned roundabout; in an unflattering way forced upon him. His position was too insecure, he told himself. . . . Perhaps the

threat in the apothecary's shop would be sufficient to shut the mouth of rumor. It had not been empty; he was still capable of uncalculating rage. How closely was Honora bound to him? What did she think of him at heart?

He couldn't bear to remember how he had laid open her dignity, the dignity and position of the Canderays in Cottarsport, to whispered vilification. Connected with him she was being discussed in "Pack" Clower's shanty. His mind revolved endlessly about the same few topics, he elaborated and discarded countless schemes to secure Honora. He even considered giving Thomas Gast a sum of money to repair what harm the latter had wrought. Useless—his danger flourished on hatred and envy and malice. However exculpable the killing of Eddie Lukens had been, the results were immeasurably unfortunate, for a simple act of violent local justice.

They were in the carriage above Cottarsport; Coggs had died through the winter, and his place been taken by a young coachman from the city. The horses rested somnolently in their harness, the bright bits of rubbed silver plate shining. Honora was looking out over the harbor, a gentian blue expanse. "Good Heavens," she cried with sudden energy, "I am getting old at a sickening rate. Only last year the schooners and sea made me as restless as a gull. I wanted to sail to the farthest places; but now the boats are—are no more than

boats. It fatigues me to think of their jumping about; and I haven't walked down to the wharves for six weeks. Do I look a haggard fright?"

"You seem as young as before I went to California," he replied simply. She did. A strand of hair had slipped from its net, and wavered across her flawless cheek, her lips were bright and smooth, her shoulders slimly square.

"You're a marvelous woman, Honora," he told her.

She gazed at him, smiling. "I wonder if you realize that that is your first compliment of our entire wedded life?"

"Ridiculous," he declared incredulously.

"Isn't it?"

"I mean I'm complimenting you all the time. I think——"

"You can hardly expect me to hear thoughts," she interrupted.

He silently debated another—it was to be about the ribbon on her throat—but decided against giving it voice. Why, like the reasons for so much else, he was unable to say; they all had their root in the blind sense of the uncertainty of his situation. Throughout the evening his thoughts shifted ceaselessly from one position to another. This, he realized, could not continue indefinitely; soon, from within or out, Honora and himself must be revealed to each other. He was permeated by the weariness of constant strain; the peace of the past months had

been destroyed; it seemed to him that he had become an alien to the serenity of the high, tranquil rooms and of his wife.

He rose early the following morning, and descended into a rapt purity of sunlight and the ecstatic whistling of robins. The front door had not been opened; and, as he turned its shining brass knob, his gaze fell upon a sheet of paper projecting below. Jason bent, securing it, and, with a premonition of evil, thrust the folded scrap into his pocket. He turned through the house into the garden; and there privately scrutinized a half sheet with a clumsily formed, disguised writing:

"This," he read, "will serve you notice to move on. Dangerous customers are not desired here. Take a suggestion in time and skip bad consequences. You can't hide back of your wife's hoops." It was signed "Committee."

A robin was thrilling the air with melody above his head. Jason listened mechanically as the bird ended his song and flew away. Then the realization of what he had found overwhelmed him with a strangling bitterness: he, Jason Burrage, had been ordered from his birthplace, he had been threatened and accused of hiding behind a woman, by the offscouring of the alleys and rum holes. A feeling of impotence thrust its chilling edge into the swelling heat of his resentment. He would have to stand

like a condemned animal before the impending fatal blow; he was held motionless, helpless, by every circumstance of his life and hopes.

He crumpled the warning in a clenched hand. How Cottarsport would point and jeer at him, at Jason Burrage who was Honora Canderay's husband, a murderer; Jason, who had returned from California with the gold fleece! It wasn't golden, he told himself, but stained—a fleece dark with blood, tarnished from hellish unhappiness, a thing infected with immeasurable miseries. Its edge had fallen on Olive Stanes and left her—he had passed her only yesterday—dry-lipped and shrunken into sterile middle age. It promised him only sorrow, and now its influence was reaching up toward Honora, in herself serenely apart from the muck and defilement out of which he thought he had struggled.

The sun, rising over the bright spring foliage, filled the garden with sparkling color. His wife, in a filmy white dress, called him to breakfast. She waited for him with her faint smile, against the cool interior. He went forward isolated, lonely, in his secret distress.

. . . . . .

This communication, like the spoken accusation of a previous evening, was, apparently, bare of other consequences. Jason's exterior life progressed without a deviation from its usual smooth course. It was clear to him that no version of the facts

about the killing of Eddie Lukens had yet spread in Cottarsport. This, he decided, considering the character of Thomas Gast, the oblique quality of his statements, was natural. He could not doubt that such public revelation, if threat and intimidation failed, must come. Meanwhile he was victimized by a growing uncertainty—from what direction would the next attack thrust?

He smiled grimly to himself at the memory of the withdrawn and secure aspect of the town when he had first returned from the West. To him, striding across the hills from the Dumner stage, it had resembled an ultimate haven. The seeming harmony and peace of the gray fold of houses about their placid harbor had concealed possibilities of debasement as low as California's worst camps. Now, successful, when he had looked for the reward of his long years of brutal toil, the end of struggle, he was confronted by the ugliest situation of his existence.

He was glad that he had always been a silent man, or Honora would have noticed and demanded the cause of the moroseness which must have settled over him. They sat no longer before the stove in the drawing room, but on a side porch that commanded an expanse of lawn and a high privet hedge, while he smoked morosely at the inevitable cheroots, gloominly searching for a way from the difficulty closing in upon him.

Honora had been to Boston, and she was de-

scribing lightly an encounter with her aunt, Herriot Cozzens. He was only half conscious of her amused voice. Clouds had obscured the evening sky, and there was an air of suspense, like that preceding a thunder storm, in the thickening dark. A restlessness filled Jason which he was unable to resist; and, with a short, vague explanation, he rose and proceeded out upon the street. There, his hands clasped behind his back and head lowered, he wandered on, lost in inner despondence.

He turned into the courthouse square, dimly lighted by gas lamps at its outer confines, and paced across the grass, stirring a few wan fireflies. It was blacker still beyond the courthouse. He stumbled slightly, recovered himself, and wearily commenced a return home. But he had scarcely taken a step when a figure closed in upon him, materializing suddenly out of the darkness. He stopped and was about to speak when a violent blow from behind grazed his head and fell with a splintering impact on his shoulder. He stood for a moment bewildered by the unexpected pain; then, as he saw another shape, and another, gather around him, he came sharply to his senses. His hand thrust into a pocket, but it was empty—he had laid aside the derringer in Cottarsport.

His assailants grappled with him swiftly, and he swayed struggling and hitting out with short blows in the centre of a silent, vicious conflict. A rough hard palm was crushed against his mouth, a head

ground into his throat, and a heavy, mucous breath of rum smote him. There was muttered cursing, and low, disregarded commands. A cotton handkerchief, evidently used as a mask, tore off in Jason's hand; strained voices, their caution lost in passion, took unmistakably the accents of "Pack" Clower and the Swede, Steven. A thinner tone outside the swirling bodies cried low and urgent, "Get it done with." A fist was driven again Jason's side, leaving a sharp, stabbing hurt, a heavy kick tore his thigh. Then he got his fingers into a neck and put into the grip all the sinewy strength got by long years with miner's pan and shovel. A choked sob responded, and blood spread stickily over his palms.

It seemed to Jason Burrage that he was shaking himself free, that he was victorious; with a final supreme wrench he stood alone, breathing in gusts. There was a second's imponderable stillness, and then the entire night appeared to crash down upon his head . . .

. . . . . .

He thought it was the flumed river, all their summer's labor, bursting over him. He was whirled downward through a swift course of jagged pains, held under the hurtling water and planks and stones. He fought, blind and strangled, but he was soon crushed into supine nothingness. Far below, the river discharged him: he was lying beside a slaty

bank in which the gold glittered like fine and countless fish scales. But he couldn't move, and the bank flattened into a plain under a gloomy ridge, with a camp of miners. He saw that it was Sunday, for the men were all grouped before the tents singing. There was Eddie Lukens gravely waving a hand to the beat of the melody:

"Don't you cry for me,
I'm going to Calaveras
With my washbowl on my knee."

It was undoubtedly Eddie, his partner, but he had never seen him so white and—why, he had a hole over his eye! Eddie Lukens was dead; it wasn't decent for him to be standing up, flapping his hands and singing. Jason bent forward to remonstrate, to persuade him to go back—back to where the dead belonged. Then he remembered, but it was too late: Eddie had him in an iron clutch, he was dragging him, too, down.

Jason made a convulsive effort to escape, he threw back his head, gasping; and saw Honora, his wife, bending over him. The tormenting illusion slowly perished—this was Cottarsport and not California, he was back again in the East, the present, married to Honora Canderay. An astounding fact, but so. Through the window of his room he could see the foliage of a great horsechestnut tree that stood by the side walk; it was swelling into flower. Full

memory now flooded back upon him, and with it the realization that probably his happiness was destroyed.

It was impossible to tell how much Honora knew of the cause of the assault upon him. She was always like that—enigmatic. But, whatever she knew now, soon she would have to hear all. Even if he wished to lie, it would be impossible to fabricate, maintain, a convincing cover for what had happened. The most superficial, necessary investigation would expose the story brought home by Thomas Gast.

The time had come when he must confide everything to Honora; perhaps she would overlook his cowardice. About to address her, he fell into a bottomless coma, and a day passed before he had gathered himself sufficiently to undertake his task. She was sitting facing him, her chair by a window, where her fingers were swiftly and smoothly occupied. Her features were a little blurred against the light, and—her disconcerting scrutiny veiled—he felt this to be an assistance.

"Those men who broke me up," he began disjointedly, surprised at the thin uncertainty of his voice, "I know pretty well who they are. Ought to get most of them."

"We thought you could say," she rejoined in an even tone. "Some guesses were made, but it was better to wait till you could give a statement."

"Am I badly hurt, Honora?" he asked suddenly.

"Not dangerously," she assured him. "You have splendid powers of recuperation."

"I'll have to go on," he added hurriedly, "and tell you the rest—why I was beaten."

"It would be better not," she stated. "You ought to be as calm as possible. It may quiet you, Jason, to hear that I know now."

"You know what the town has been saying," he cried in bitter revolt, "what lies Thomas Gast spread. You've heard all the envy and malice and drunken vileness of sots. It isn't right for you to think you know before I could speak a word of defense."

"Not only what the town says, Jason," she replied simply, "but the truth. Olive Stanes told me."

"Then——" An excited weakness broke his voice in a sob, and Honora rose, crossing the room to his bed. "You must positively stop talking of this now," she directed. "If you attempt it I shall go away and send a nurse."

He was helpless against her will, and sank into semi-slumberous wonder. Honora knew all: Olive Stanes had told her. She was as non-committal, he complained to himself, as a wooden Indian. She might have excused him without a second thought, and it might be that she had finished with him entirely, that she was merely dispensing a charity and duty; and, moving uneasily, or lying propped up in a temporary release from suffering, he would study her every movement in an endeavor to gain

her all-important opinion of him as he had been lately revealed. It was useless; he was always, Jason felt, in a state of disturbing suspense.

He determined to end it, however, in spite of what Honora had said, on an afternoon when he was supported down to the street and the carriage. His wife took her place at his side, and they rolled forward into the expansive warmth of summer. Jason was impressed by the sheer repetition of life; and it seemed to him that this was the greatest happiness possible—such a procession of days and drives with Honora.

Her throat rose delicately from ruffled lace, circled by a narrow black velvet band with a clasp of remarkable diamonds; and he smiled at the memory of how he had once thought she was marrying him for money. That seemed years ago, but he was no nearer the solution of her motive now than then. Her slim hands were folded in her lap —how beautifully they were joined at the wrists; her tapering fingers were like ivory. As he studied them he was startled at their suddenly meeting in a rigid clasp, the knuckles white and sharp. He looked up and saw that they were drawing near a small group of men outside the apothecary's shop.

A curious silence fell upon these as the carriage approached: there were the two Radlaws, one saturnine and bleak, the other greenish, shattered by drugs; Thomas Gast; Vleet, the fishing schooner's master, and a casual, familiar passerby. Jason

Burrage stared at them with a stony ominous countenance, at which Gast made a gesture of combined insolence and uncertainty. Jason had sunk back on the cushions when he was astonished by Honora's commanding the coachman to stop. It was evident that she was about to descend; he put out a hand to restrain her, but she disregarded him. His astonishment increased to incredulity and then fear; he rose hurriedly, but relaxed with a mutter of pain.

Honora, a Canderay, had taken the carriage whip from its holder, and was walking, direct and composed, toward Thomas Gast. She stopped a short distance away: before an exclamation, a movement, was possible she had swept the thong of the whip across Gast's face. The blow was swung with force, and the man faltered, a burning welt on the pallor of his countenance. The coachman and Jason Burrage in the carriage, the men together on the sidewalk, seemed part of an inanimate group of which the only thing endowed with life was the whip flickering again, cutting and wrapping, about a face.

There was a curiously ruthless impersonality about Honora's erect presence, her icy cold profile. Memories of old stories of Ithiel Canderay, the necessary salt cruelness of punishment in ships, flashed through Jason's mind. An intolerable weight of time seemed to drag upon him. Thomas Gast gave a horse gurgle and lurched forward, but the relentless lash drove him back.

"You whisperer!" Honora said in her ringing

voice, "you liar and slabbering coward! It's necessary to cut the truth out of you. When you talk again about Mr. Burrage and the man he shot in California don't leave out the smallest detail of his exoneration. Say that he had been robbed, the other broke one of the first laws of miners and should have been killed. You'd not have done it—a knife in the back would be your thought—but a man would!"

She flung the whip down on the bricks.

Thomas Gast pressed his hands to his face, and slow red stains widened through his fingers. The apothecary stood transfixed; his brother was shaking in a febrile and congested horror. The woman turned disdainfully, moving to the carriage; the coachman descended and offered his arm as she mounted to the seat. The reins were drawn and the horses started forward in a walk.

Honora's gaze was set, looking directly ahead; her hands, in her lap of flowered muslin, were now relaxed; they gave an impression of crushing weariness. Jason's heart pounded like a forge hammer; a tremendous realization was forced into his brain—he need never again question why Honora had married him; his doubts were answered, stopped, for ever. He turned to her to speak an insignificant part of his measureless gratitude, but he was choked, blinded, by a passion of honor and homage.

Her gaze sought him, and there was a faint

tremor of her lips; it grew into the shadow of an ironic smile. Suddenly it was borne upon his new, acquiescent serenity that Honora would always be a Canderay for him, he must perpetually think of her in the terms of his early habit; she would eternally be a little beyond him, a being to approach, to attend, with ceremony. The memory and sweep of all California, the pageant of life he had seen on the way, his own boasted success and importance, faded before the solid fact of Honora's commanding heritage in life, in Cottarsport.

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

MR. HERGESHEIMER'S position as a foremost American novelist has been gained since the middle of 1914 when his first novel "The Lay Anthony" was published. This was just 14 years after he began writing.

As Llewellyn Jones has said, "The first demand that the larger public makes upon a novelist is that his personal life shall be as romantic as his novels. Fortunately Mr. Hergesheimer can meet that demand—certainly any one who can recognize romance when he sees it will recognize it in Mr. Hergesheimer's life."

As the name indicates, he is Pennsylvania Dutch. Born February 15, 1880, brought up in a Presbyterian home, his youth was passed in a state of ill health which interfered with systematic study, but which gave him time for the profitable reading of many paper covered novels. After very little schooling, he entered the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts at the age of 17 to study painting.

At 21, he was left some money, and instead of investing it, he went to Italy, living in Venice until his funds were exhausted. At home, he went off on a walking tour in the course of which he fell in with a woman novelist who enlisted his aid in her proof reading. A certain hostility to what he read planted in him the seeds of authorship. He did not like what she had written and determined to try fiction himself. His first attempt was a failure, but he had found what he wanted to do, and set about doing it in earnest.

JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

In a village in the Virginia mountains he went seriously to work, writing and rewriting one story from beginning to end twenty times, part of it a hundred times. Fourteen years later, having worked incessantly in this spirit in the interval, he sold his first tale. Since then he has not looked back. For some years he and his wife have lived in an old stone house in West Chester, Pennsylvania. His home overlooks beautiful country. There are Airedales on his lawn and rock-bass not too far distant.

Mr. Hergesheimer has always found particular joy in the reconstruction of earlier periods of American life, and before writing he has literally drenched himself in the atmosphere of the particular time and environment in mind. Carl Van Doren wrote, "His landscapes, his interiors, his costumes he sets forth with a profusion of exquisite details which gives his texture the semblance of brocade. . . . He has looked luxuriously through the world for subjects which his style will fit. The small island towns of "The Lay Anthony," the blue Virginia valleys of "Mountain Blood," the evolving Pennsylvania iron districts of "The Three Black Pennys," the antique Salem of "Java Head," the fashionable hotels and houses of "Linda Condon," the scattered exotic localities of the short stories—in all these Mr. Hergesheimer is at home with the cool insouciance of genius, at home as he could not be without an erudition founded in the keenest "observation and research."

In the years of his apprentice work his masters were Conrad, Henry James, Meredith, and Flaubert. He has always wanted "to write into paper and ink some permanence of beauty." He does not rely upon current events, current "social tendencies," and current cant of any sort. Thus, he has not limited himself to any particular field or atmosphere but always following his ideal of beauty he is able to choose whatever scene best suits this one need in the one work. He believes that style means personality, and in his novels there is a sincere effort to present his characters as he has conceived them, whether romantic, or realistic, or what not. But this does not mean that he writes haphazardly. His fourteen years of apprenticeship were not spent in idleness.

The following is the order in which Mr. Hergesheimer's books have appeared:

THE LAY ANTHONY, 1914
MOUNTAIN BLOOD, 1915
THE THREE BLACK PENNYS, 1917
GOLD AND IRON, 1918. (This contained "Wild Oranges," "Tubal Cain," and "The Dark Fleece." These were published separately in 1922.)
THE HAPPY END, 1919
JAVA HEAD, 1919
LINDA CONDON, 1919
SAN CRISTOBAL DE LA HABANA, 1920
CYTHEREA, 1922
THE BRIGHT SHAWL, 1922
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHILD, 1923.

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